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WEDDING
BY ANDREW SULLIVAN

SPECIAL ELECTION '08 ISSUE

Atlantic

SEPTEMBER 2008

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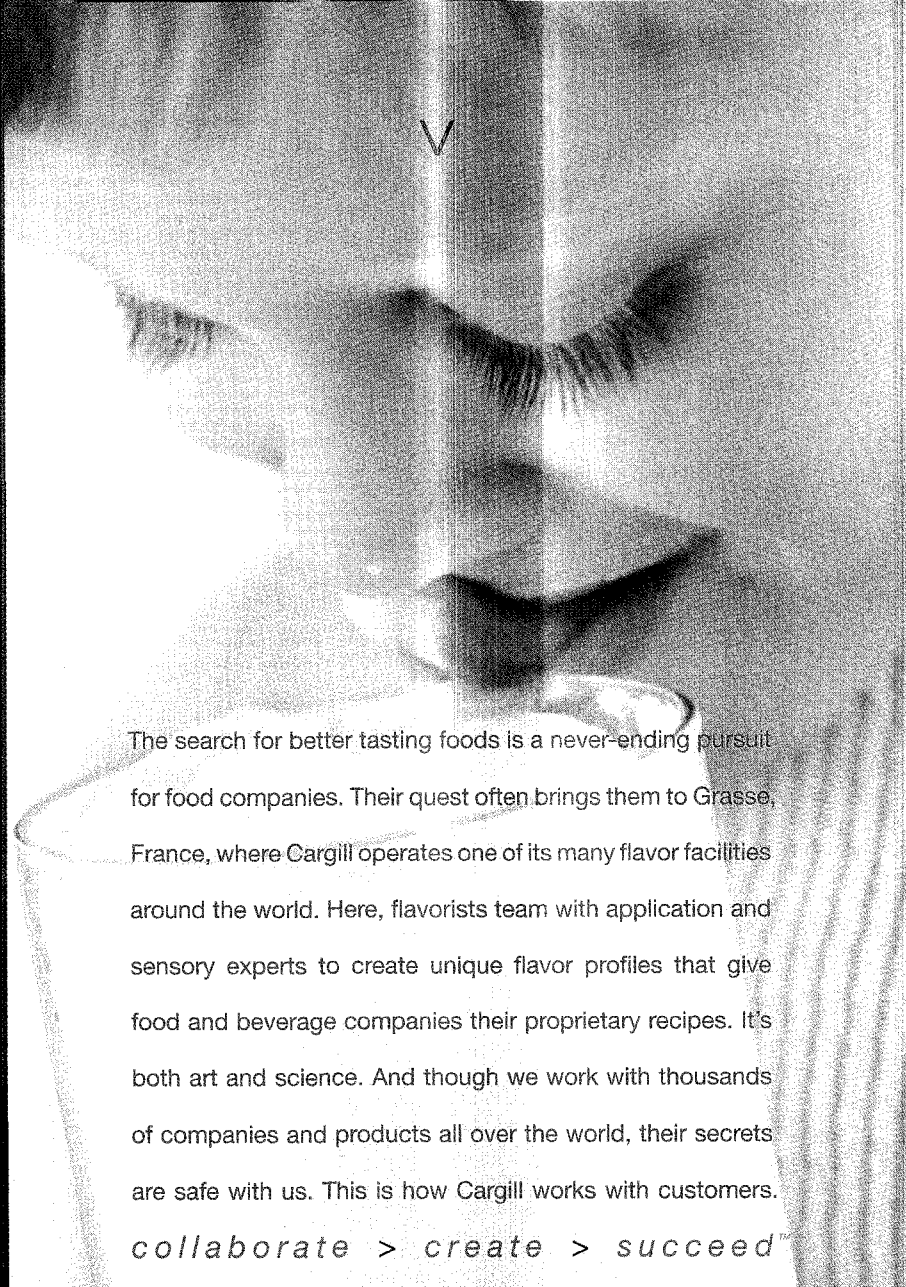
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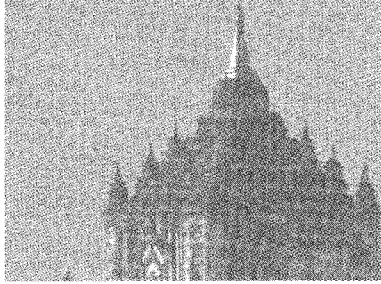
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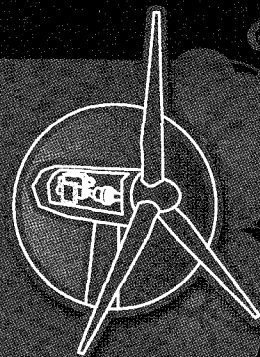
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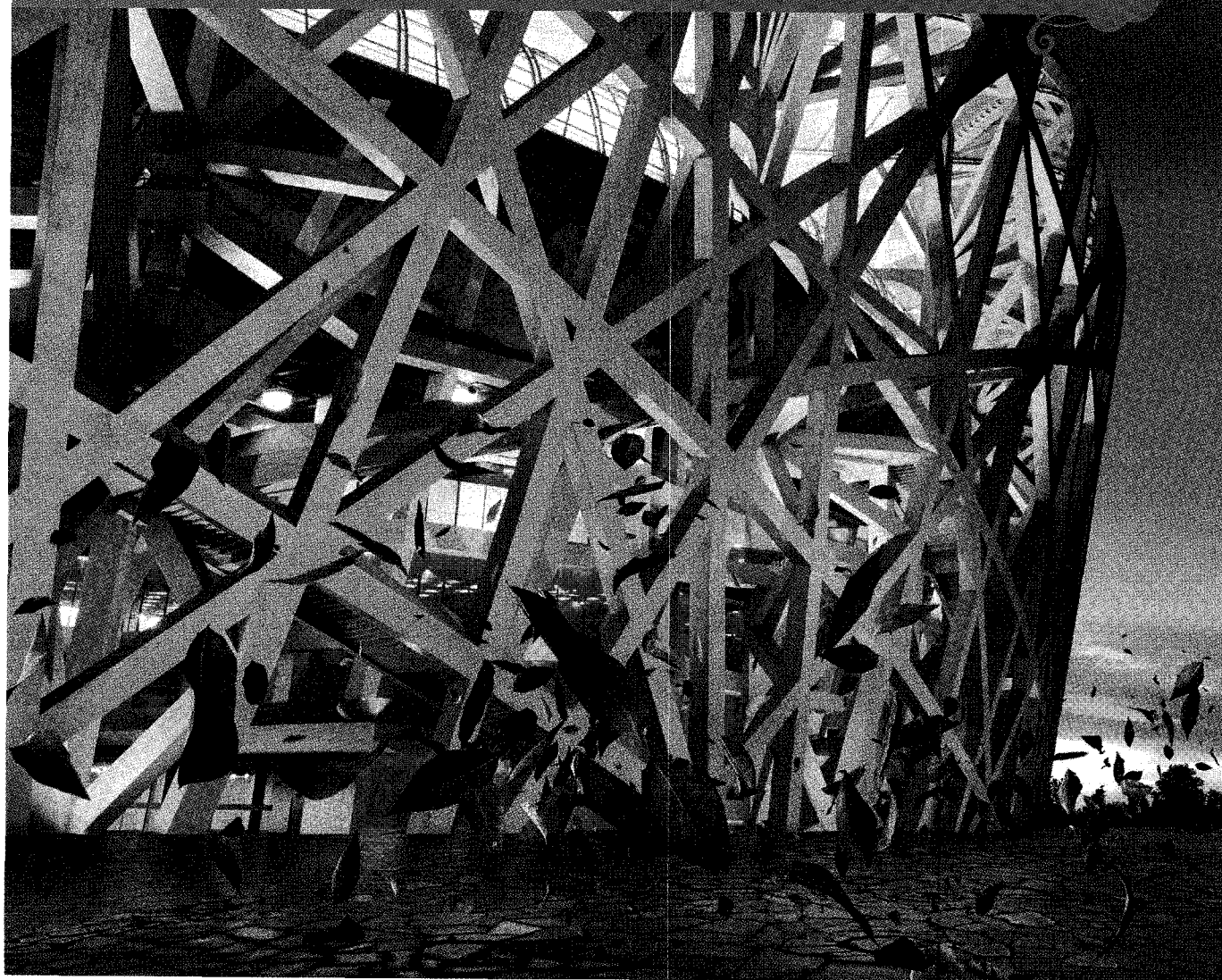
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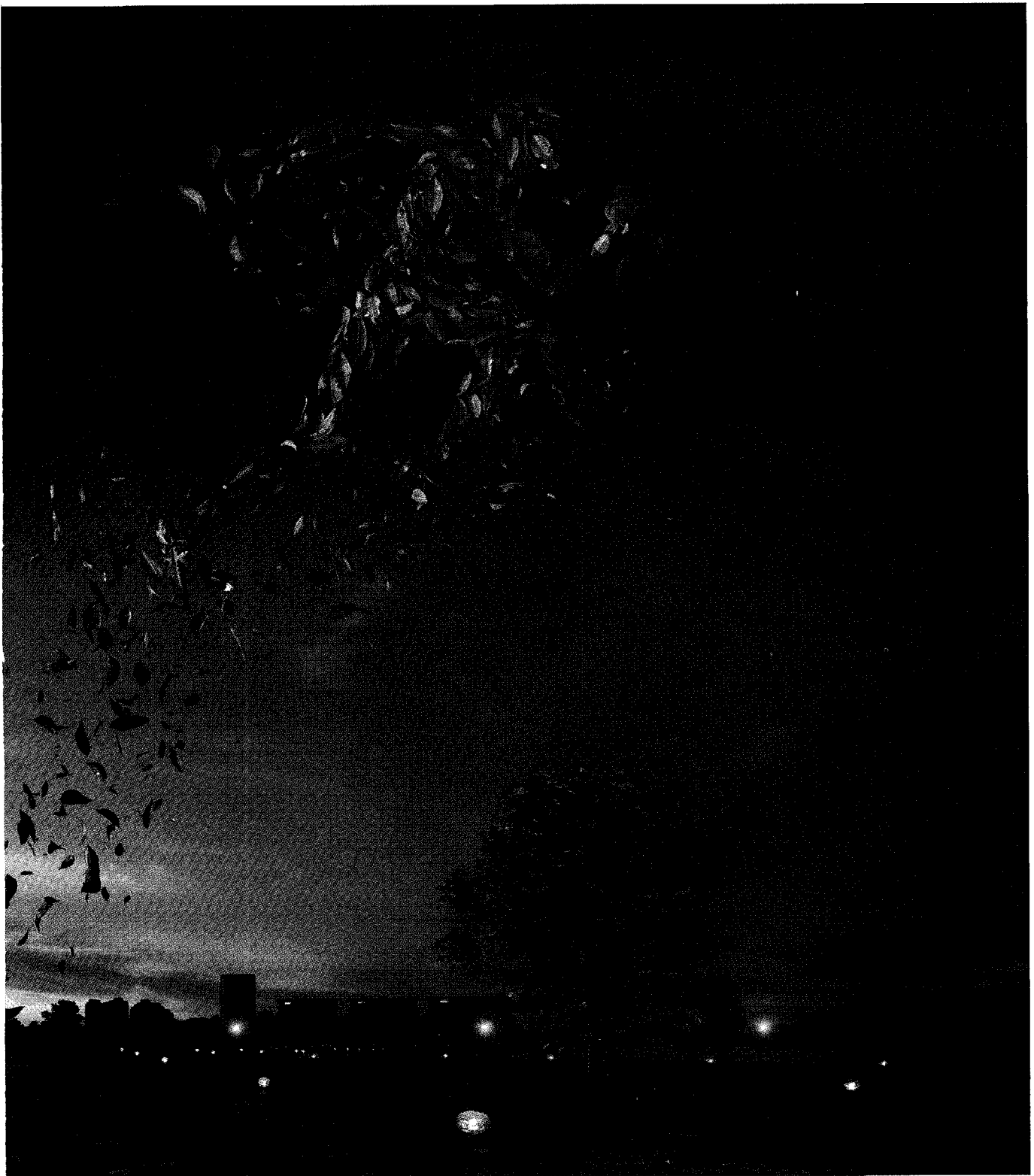
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PHOTO BY KEFEN SU/CORBIS

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VIDEO: THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

Caitlin Flanagan offers a guided tour of '70s-era Berkeley, where the infamous Patty Hearst kidnapping saga unfolded.

VIDEO: WHAT'S IN A BUG?

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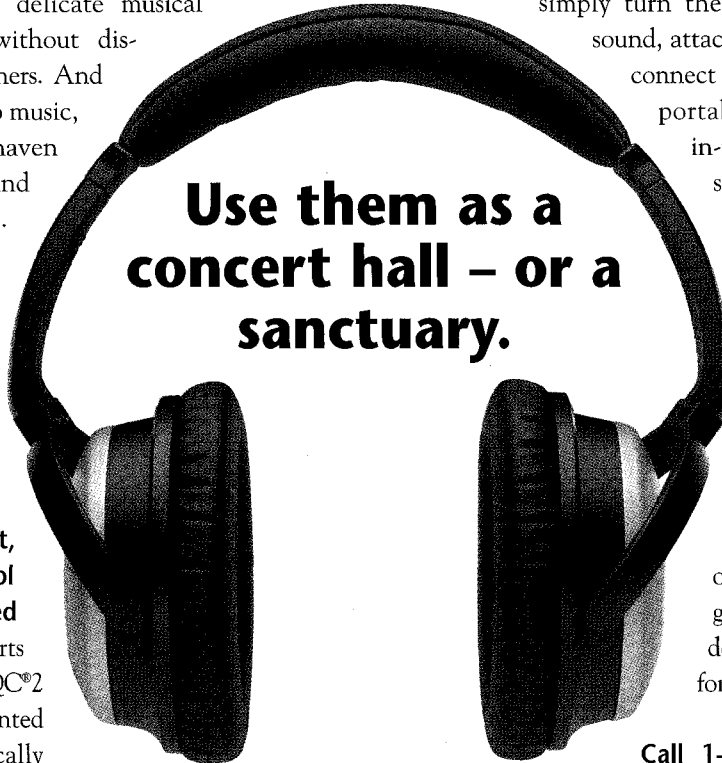
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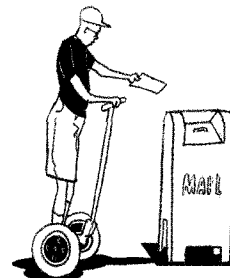
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SEPTEMBER 2008 THE ATLANTIC



CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Joshua Green ("The Amazing Money Machine," June *Atlantic*) is probably too young to remember the revolutionary direct-mail campaign that fueled George McGovern's '72 presidential campaign. It was the brainchild of Morris Dees, who, along with a couple of brilliant direct-marketing guys from New York, put together "The Presidential Club"—a monthly giving campaign for small donors for McGovern. It was a huge success and embodied all the principles Green is now attributing to Mark Gorenberg. The only thing it lacked was the Internet and the kind of instant digital technology that is available now.

Because McGovern suffered such an ignominious defeat, people tend to forget that there were aspects of his campaign—energizing the younger generation, speaking out early and often against a very ill-advised war effort, and small-donor fund-raising in particular—to which Gorenberg and Obama owe a great deal in terms of precedent.

Senator McGovern is 84 now and deserves much more recognition for his contributions to the Democrats. Young pups like Green really ought to spend a little more time doing their homework before making sweeping statements like "The only way to raise money was to attract small donors, a task Democrats had never done well."

Larry Bangs
Boulder, Colo.

Joshua Green replies:

Larry Bangs might benefit from doing a little homework, too. George McGovern was outspent 2-to-1 by Richard Nixon in 1972. My article explained why that won't happen to Barack Obama. He has reached a broader, more diverse group of small-dollar donors than McGovern ever did—and one that I'll bet even includes its share of curmudgeons.

NEAR-EARTH OBJECTS

Gregg Easterbrook paints a vivid picture of impending cataclysmic impacts and urges a massive repositioning of government funding toward asteroid defense ("The Sky Is Falling," June *Atlantic*). Easterbrook is a distinguished science journalist, but he has spun a sensational Chicken Little story. His article suggests that the probability of a "devastating" Earth impact this century is as high as one in 10. Multiple research studies based on craters, atmospheric strikes, and counts of near-Earth objects suggest probabilities hundreds to thousands of times lower.

The difference between catastrophic Earth impacts every 300,000 years and every 1,000 years is the difference between an infinitesimal threat and looming Armageddon. Guided mostly by solid science, NASA and other national and international agencies have prioritized their programs rationally—monitoring near-Earth objects but not massively shifting resources to some Star Wars-style defense system aimed upward.

Historical and geological records stretching back thousands of years indicate that floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis kill thousands of humans worldwide on a regular basis. In contrast, there's no evidence that any human anywhere has ever been killed by an extra-terrestrial impact. Societies do little enough to mitigate the real and pressing threats from earthly natural hazards without shifting resources to imagined dangers from the wild fringes of the solar system and the wild fringes of science.

Nicholas Pinter and Scott Ishman
Department of Geology
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Ill.

Gregg Easterbrook replies:

Estimates of the frequency of space-rock strikes are just estimates, and may not tell us anything about when the next impact

will occur—it could be an eon, it could be tomorrow. Floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis are sure to happen more frequently, but humanity will survive these events; we might not survive an impact from space. Meanwhile, nothing can be done to prevent earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis. But space strikes appear to be entirely avoidable, and not necessarily with "massive repositioning of government funding." A fraction of the money NASA wants to waste on a moon base would likely be sufficient.

THE OLD COLLEGE TRY

I will acknowledge that secondary schools have been allowing numerous underprepared students to pass on to the next level of education, and I agree that the buck has to stop with someone and that that someone must often be me—the lower-division adjunct English instructor at a university with few acceptance requirements—but I vehemently disagree with Professor X ("In the Basement of the Ivory Tower," June *Atlantic*) that the solution is to fail these students in their required English courses.

The author seems to think he's there to test his students on whether they already know how to complete a writing task, rather than to teach them how to complete it. The real travesty is that universities are willing to hire people who aren't interested in their students' success. Many of my students pass my courses because of a tremendous amount of work on both our parts, and while it can be exhausting at times, it's work that I ultimately find deeply satisfying. Perhaps it's time for Professor X to look for employment elsewhere than in our higher-education system, where he has clearly "los[t] faith in the task."

Keetje Kuipers
Adjunct Associate Professor
University of Montana
Missoula, Mont.

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Professor X reveals a trend in American society that is reducing yet another meaningful experience—in this case, getting a college education—to its lowest common denominator: obtaining a college degree.

Adult education has become the cash cow for many small regional colleges and universities, and for many free-standing “universities.” One cannot drive through any large city in the country without seeing names with *University* attached, offering degrees in any subject. One can now get (I do not write *earn*) a Ph.D. online. For many Americans and their employers, it makes little difference where one gets the degree. Satellite centers are established in shopping centers; part-time faculty is hired on a course-by-course basis; an open-admissions policy allows anyone who can pay the fee to enroll in classes.

May the Goddess of Wisdom continue to bless Professor X, who is swimming against the current that is sweeping America toward becoming the country with the highest level of college degrees and the lowest level of college education.

James C. Coomer

*Emeritus professor of political science
Norcross, Ga.*

Professor X’s rebuke of American colleges for their practice of admitting students “to classes they cannot possibly pass” is basically unchallengeable. Anyone who’s been involved in adjunct teaching at the community-college level over the past 10 or 15 years, in particular English Composition I and II, will nod in instant recognition at almost every point he makes and every personal anecdote he uses. Yet his critique falls far short of identifying the root cause of the problem: the systematic underfunding of public higher education.

Take the City University of New York (CUNY). Once a beacon on the hill, in the late 1970s it fell victim to the type of savage budget-axing and personnel downsizing that corporate America would in the 1990s impose across broad sectors of the American labor force. As a consequence, close to 70 percent of

all CUNY teachers are, like Professor X, part-time.

Massive underfunding inevitably produces a situation in which college administrators begin acting like subprime-mortgage lenders, preying on the working poor by promising, as the Borough of Manhattan Community College did in its recent advertising blitzkrieg across the city, “When you start here, you can go anywhere!” In 2006, I quit a tenured teaching position at BMCC largely because, between 2000 and 2006, the college added more than 3,000 new students, instantly producing all the same depressing classroom stories chronicled by Professor X.

Professor X will have us believe this whole situation is an indictment of the American ideal of an affordable and accessible higher education for everyone. It is a tempting conclusion to draw for anyone working in the trenches of the American community-college system. In the end, though, Professor X offers nothing more than a classic case of lashing out in the direction of least resistance—of blaming the victims instead of the U.S. corporate oligarchy.

*Jonathan Scott
Bronx, N.Y.*

CRIME EXPLOSION

Hanna Rosin fingers the wrong suspect for the alarming jump in murder rates in Memphis’s suburbs (“American Murder Mystery,” July/August *Atlantic*). She purports to use social-science research, including our own, to lay the blame on the HOPE VI public-housing program. We and other researchers worked at length with Ms. Rosin to make it clear that Housing Choice (Section 8) vouchers, the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program, the Gautreaux program, and HOPE VI differ greatly from each other, but all have helped improve the lives of poor families in many ways.

Rosin twists these findings into an incriminating link between such anti-poverty efforts and increased crime. She quotes Susan Popkin as saying that MTO and HOPE VI did not boost families’

self-sufficiency and that HOPE VI “has left a lot of people behind.” Yes, these housing programs have not increased employment, but Rosin’s summary understates their positive results and distorts the facts.

Many families who got housing vouchers through these programs are much better off now than they were in public housing. In their new neighborhoods, they no longer have to fear for their children’s safety, and the mental-health benefits for women and girls are on par with the results for antidepressant therapies. Because of the realities of the rental market, families who get vouchers often end up renting in transitional neighborhoods that may already be experiencing an increase in crime and poverty. There is no evidence that helping families move with vouchers causes crime. The people Popkin says are left behind are the most-vulnerable families. For these families, better housing is not enough, because they are struggling with serious health problems, substance abuse, and poor credit histories.

In questioning the Gautreaux results, Rosin disregards Stefanie DeLuca and colleagues’ recent findings that 15 to 20 years later, more than two-thirds of the families are still in better neighborhoods, and many mothers continue to enjoy employment gains and fewer require welfare. Housing policy alone does not solve all the problems facing urban families. However, cherry-picking research to write off the housing programs that do make a difference only misleads readers who want to understand the challenges and accomplishments of policies designed to help vulnerable families.

*Susan J. Popkin
Principal Research Associate
Metropolitan Housing and
Communities Policy Center
The Urban Institute
Washington, D.C.*

*Stefanie DeLuca
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Md.*

Hanna Rosin replies:

Of course housing reforms have improved some lives in some ways. You couldn't spend that much money and effort and make no difference. The question is: How much, and at what cost? The measurable improvements that social scientists point to are important but elusive: an increased sense of security and less depression. These are not on the same level as the concrete goals laid out when this program began: jobs, better education, and escape from poverty. Many experts I met were still supportive of the housing effort, yet all were confounded or disappointed by how it has turned out so far.

What happened in that controlled Gautreaux experiment bears no relationship to what happened when tens of thousands of public-housing residents were forced to leave their homes. Residents got a voucher, but little guidance about where to move. Most moved into transitional neighborhoods, where they lost a sense of

community and an external support system. Worse yet, they helped tip these marginal neighborhoods into dysfunction and crime. As a result, the inner rings of suburbs around American cities look nothing like they did 10 or 15 years ago.

The most common criticism I get from academics is that I have no proof that the dispersal of Section 8 voucher holders increases crime. If by proof they mean an independent, 10-year longitudinal study, I concede. But the proof that already exists is pretty powerful. When the two Memphis researchers I wrote about compared the new crime hot spots to where Section 8 voucher holders had moved, they found a near-exact match. In city after city, police chiefs will tell you that taking the poorest residents out of the inner city has only moved the crime elsewhere.

The solution is not to burrow in and defend housing reform as it exists. Nor is it to give up entirely on the effort and leave the poor to fend for themselves. The

answer is to face the new urban demographics and find ways to help people where they now live.

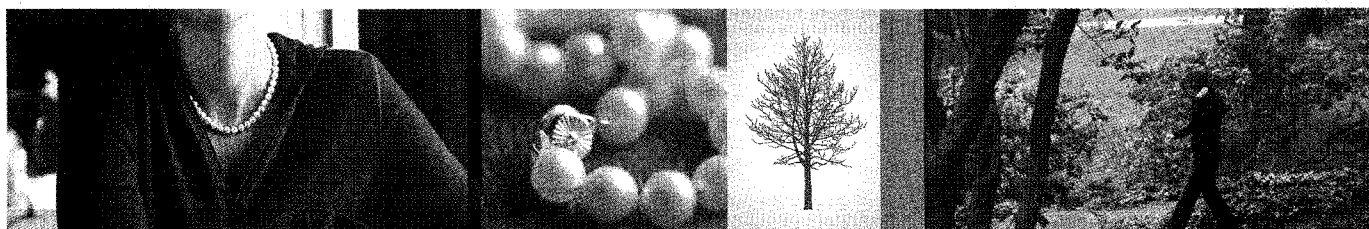
ADVICE AND CONSENT

Joshua Green, in his article about Al Franken's run for the U.S. Senate in Minnesota ("He's Not Joking," *May Atlantic*), suggests that the Democrats could win a "veto-proof majority in the Senate." I believe he meant to say, "a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate." A filibuster-proof majority requires 60 votes, whereas a veto-proof majority requires 67 votes. I don't think that even the most-optimistic Democrats realistically think that the Democrats can wind up with 67 Senate seats.

Michael J. Skarpelos
San Jose, Calif.

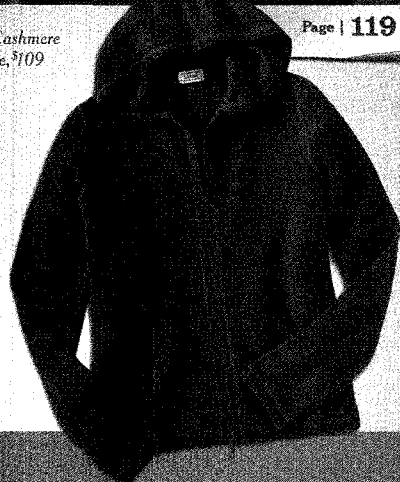
Joshua Green replies:

Thank you to Michael Skarpelos for the correction.



Sporty Cashmere Hoodie, \$109

Page | 119



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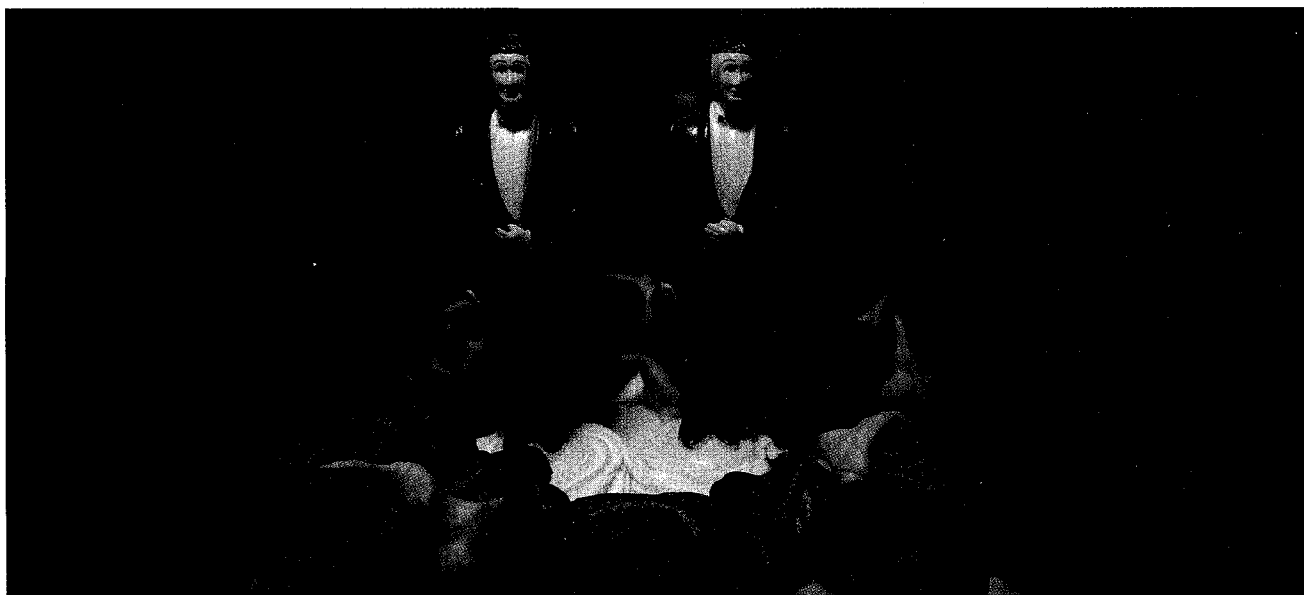
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THE AGENDA

SEPTEMBER 2008 THE ATLANTIC



COMMENT

What's the difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals? In matters outside the bedroom, American culture and law are at last acknowledging that there is none.

My Big Fat Straight Wedding

BY ANDREW SULLIVAN

What if gays were straight?

The question is absurd—gays are defined as not straight, right?—yet increasingly central to the debate over civil-marriage rights. Here is how California's Supreme Court put it in a key passage in its now-famous May 15 ruling that gay couples in California must be granted the right to marry, with no qualifications or euphemisms:

These core substantive rights include, most fundamentally, the opportunity of an individual to establish—with the person with whom the individual has chosen to share his or her life—an *officially recognized and protected family* possessing mutual rights and responsibilities and entitled to the same respect and dignity

accorded a union traditionally designated as marriage.

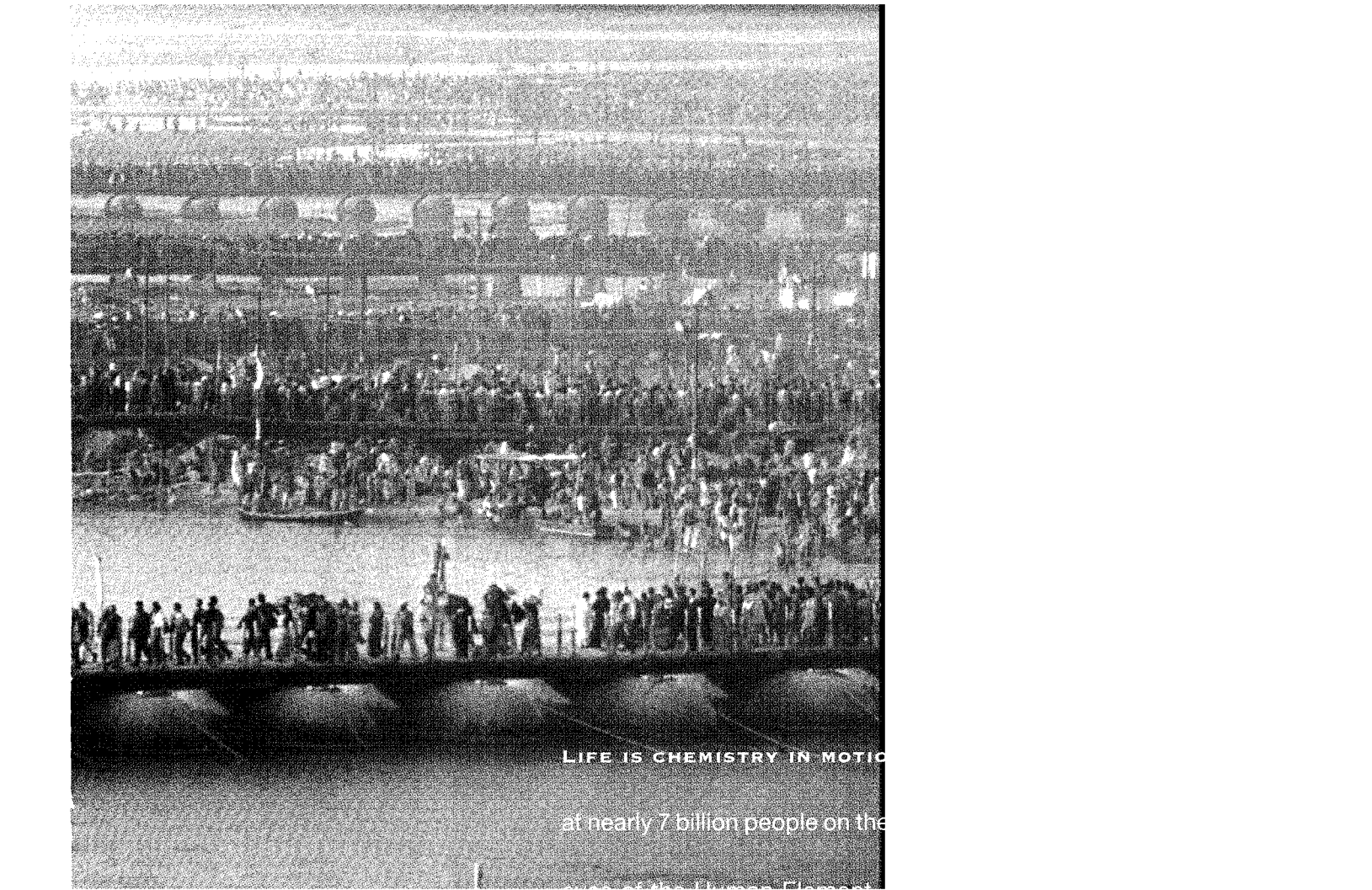
What's notable here is the starting point of the discussion: an "individual." The individual citizen posited by the court is defined as prior to his or her sexual orientation. He or she exists as a person before he or she exists as straight or gay. And the right under discussion is defined as "the opportunity of an individual" to choose another "person" to "establish a family" in which reproduction and children are not necessary. And so the distinction between gay and straight is essentially abolished. For all the debate about the law in this decision, the debate about the terms under discussion has been close to nonexistent. And yet in many ways, these

terms are at the core of the decision, and are the reason why it is such a watershed. The ruling, and the language it uses, represents the removal of the premise of the last generation in favor of a premise accepted as a given by the next.

The premise used to be that homosexuality was an activity, that gays were people who chose to behave badly; or, if they weren't choosing to behave badly, were nonetheless suffering from a form of sickness or, in the words of the Vatican, an "objective disorder." And so the question of whether to permit the acts and activities of such disordered individuals was a legitimate area of legislation and regulation.

But when gays are seen as the same as straights—as individuals; as normal,





LIFE IS CHEMISTRY IN MOTION

at nearly 7 billion people on the

ness of the Human Element

well-adjusted, human individuals—the argument changes altogether. The question becomes a matter of how we treat a minority with an involuntary, defining characteristic along the lines of gender or race. And when a generation came of age that did not merely grasp this intellectually, but knew it from their own lives and friends and family members, then the logic for full equality became irresistible.

This transformation in understanding happened organically. It began with the sexual revolution in the 1970s, and then came crashing into countless previously unaware families, as their sons and uncles and fathers died in vast numbers from AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s. It emerged as younger generations came out earlier and earlier, and as their peers came to see gay people as fellows and siblings, rather than as denizens of some distant and alien subculture. It happened

The right to marry whoever one wishes is an elementary human right compared to which ‘the right to attend an integrated school, the right to sit where one pleases on a bus, the right to go into any hotel or recreation area or place of amusement, regardless of one’s skin or color or race’ are minor indeed. Even political rights, like the right to vote, and nearly all other rights enumerated in the Constitution, are secondary to the inalienable human rights to ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’ proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence; and to this category the right to home and marriage unquestionably belongs.

Note that Arendt put the right to marry before even the right to vote. And this is how many gay people of the next generation see it. Born into straight families and reared to see homosexuality as a form of difference, not disability, they

I was no longer my partner’s “friend” or “boyfriend”; I was his fiancé. Suddenly, everyone involved themselves in our love. They asked how I had proposed; they inquired when the wedding would be; my straight friends made jokes about marriage that simply included me as one of them. At that first post-engagement Christmas with my in-laws, I felt something shift. They had always been welcoming and supportive. But now I was family. I felt an end—a sudden, fateful end—to an emotional displacement I had experienced since childhood.

The wedding occurred last August in Massachusetts in front of a small group of family and close friends. And in that group, I suddenly realized, it was the heterosexuals who knew what to do, who guided the gay couple and our friends into the rituals and rites of family. Ours was not, we realized, a different institution, after all, and we were not different kinds of people. In the doing of it, it was the same as my sister’s wedding and we were the same as my sister and brother-in-law. The strange, bewildering emotions of the moment, the cake and reception, the distracted children and weeping mothers, the morning’s butterflies and the night’s drunkenness: this was not a gay marriage; it was a marriage.

And our families instantly and for the first time since our early childhood became not just institutions in which we were included, but institutions that we too owned and perpetuated. My sister spoke of her marriage as if it were interchangeable with my own, and my niece and nephew had no qualms in referring to my husband as their new uncle. The embossed invitations and the floral bouquets and the fear of fluffing our vows: in these tiny, bonding gestures of integration, we all came to see an alienating distinction become a unifying difference.

It was a moment that shifted a sense of our own identity within our psyches and even our souls. Once this happens, the law eventually follows. In California this spring, it did. ▀

Andrew Sullivan, an *Atlantic* senior editor, blogs at andrewsullivan.theatlantic.com.

The bewildering emotions, the distracted children, the weeping mothers: this was not a gay marriage; it was a marriage.

as lesbian couples became parents and as gay soldiers challenged the discrimination against them. And it percolated up through the popular culture—from *Will & Grace* and *Ellen* to almost every reality show since *The Real World*.

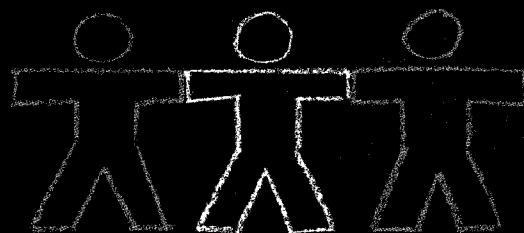
What California’s court did, then, was not to recognize a new right to same-sex marriage. It was to acknowledge an emergent cultural consensus. And once that consensus had been accepted, the denial of the right to marry became, for many, a constitutional outrage. The right to marry, after all, is, as the court put it, “one of the basic, inalienable civil rights guaranteed to an individual.” Its denial was necessarily an outrage—and not merely an anomaly—because the right to marry has such deep and inalienable status in American constitutional law.

The political theorist Hannah Arendt, addressing the debate over miscegenation laws during the civil-rights movement of the 1950s, put it clearly enough:

naturally wonder why they would be excluded from the integral institution of their own families’ lives and history. They see this exclusion as unimaginable—as unimaginable as straight people would if they were told that they could not legally marry someone of their choosing. No other institution has an equivalent power to include people in their own familial narrative or civic history as deeply or as powerfully as civil marriage does. And the next generation see themselves as people first and gay second.

Born in a different era, I reached that conclusion through more pain and fear and self-loathing than my 20-something fellow homosexuals do today. But it was always clear to me nonetheless. It just never fully came home to me until I too got married.

It happened first when we told our families and friends of our intentions. Suddenly, they had a vocabulary to describe and understand our relationship.



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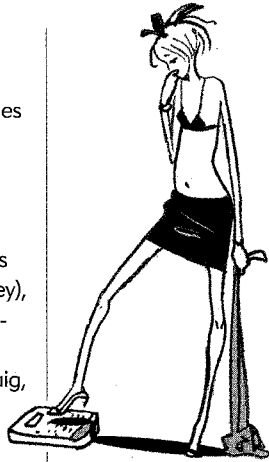
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What to watch for in the weeks ahead Calendar

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SEPT 1-4 **Prairie Home Convention**

The Republican Party invades the Twin Cities this week to formally anoint John McCain. Minnesota, now considered a swing state, historically is enemy territory: it has produced two major Democratic presidential hopefuls (Walter Mondale and Hubert Humphrey), was the only state to elude Ronald Reagan in 1984, and recently claimed the career of Republican Senator Larry Craig, whose infamous "wide stance" in the Minneapolis airport led to his arrest.



SEPT 14-19 **Cakewalk**

When eating disorders claimed the lives of two models in 2006, the fashion industry didn't take it in stride. Madrid's Fashion Week established a minimum body-mass index for models. Organizers of this week's London Fashion Week will forgo the Madrid minimum—it might not detect bulimia—and are instead working on a program that would require health certificates for models.



SEPT 18 **Hanging Tough**

Like relentless zombies in a horror film, '80s nostalgia acts keep trudging along, undaunted. The latest to terrorize your eardrums is the ur-boy band New Kids on the Block, which begins its reunion tour tonight in Toronto. Bar the door.



SEPT 14 **To Love, Honor ...**

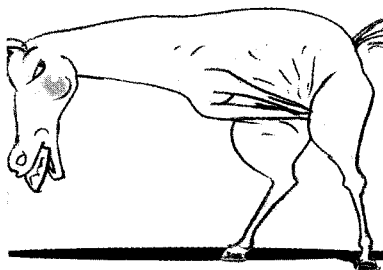
Trekkie bliss abounds today at the Los Angeles nuptials of actor George Takei (*Star Trek's* Mr. Sulu) and his longtime partner, Brad Altman. Chekov is best man, Uhura matron of honor. Altman proposed immediately upon learning of the California Supreme Court's decision to allow gay marriage, as Mr. Sulu was eating a sandwich in their kitchen.

SEPT 21 **... And Obey**

Iran's wide-ranging morals crackdown has prompted a state-owned energy company to order its single employees to marry by today—or be fired. The mandate is intended to reduce the number of young single men—and the prostitutes who sell their services to them—at Pars Special Economic Energy Zone Company, a massive refinery complex on the Persian Gulf.

SEPT **The Hard Fall**

24 The trial that aired Hollywood's dirty laundry draws to a close with today's sentencing of Anthony Pellicano. Don't expect a Hollywood ending for the Los Angeles private eye, who made problems disappear for such heavyweight clients as Chris Rock and Michael Ovitz. In May, Pellicano was found guilty on 76 counts, including racketeering, wiretapping, and conspiracy. He has requested a retrial.



SEPT **Unsound**

29 Legendary music producer and noted eccentric Phil Spector once again stands trial for murder today. The "wall of sound" pioneer was charged with shooting B-movie actress Lana Clarkson at his mansion in 2003 but claimed that Clarkson had shot herself. His first trial ended in a deadlocked jury.

ALSO THIS MONTH: **Stay or Go?**

General David Petraeus has hinted that he'll recommend further U.S. troop withdrawals from Iraq when he issues another progress report this month (the drawdown has been on hold). It will be Petraeus's last report before leaving Iraq to take over U.S. Central Command.



SEPT **Casting a Spell**

25 Daniel Radcliffe, who has portrayed the adorable Harry Potter on the silver screen, debuts on Broadway tonight in the psychological horse-love drama *Equus*. His nude scene in the play's London run left many muggles agog.

SEPT **An Iraqi Surge**

30 The U.S. plans to have accepted 12,000 Iraqi refugees by today, the end of the 2008 fiscal year. Severely criticized for having let in a scant 1,608 refugees last year, the State Department had already accepted 4,742 by the end of May. By contrast, Sweden, which opposed the war, has taken in 40,000 refugees since 2003.

The Price of Justice

War-crimes trials for senior Khmer Rouge leaders are set to begin this month in Cambodia. The tribunal is intended to bring justice nearly 30 years after the regime killed 2 million Cambodians; preliminary proceedings have been marred by accusations of corruption and mismanagement. The first suspect on trial is Kaing Guek Iev, the notorious chief of the Tuol Sleng prison.

PRIMARY SOURCES

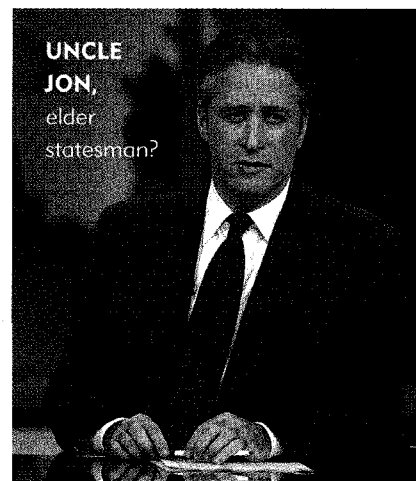
ECONOMICS

Wages of Wins

Plenty of CEOs have reached the corporate summit with fists full of cash and mouths stuffed with cigars. But only a select few—like Bill Gates or Lee Iacocca—have ascended to full-blown media superstardom. These standouts tend to succumb to the lures of celebrity culture, a new study finds, leaving their companies to plod along in mediocrity. The authors examined the performance and compensation of fat cats who had been singled out for prominent awards—like *BusinessWeek*'s "Best Manager," or *Forbes*'s "Best-Performing CEOs"—between 1975 and 2002. They found

that while the winners' compensation shot up in the years following their prize (by 44 percent on average in the first year alone), their performance declined substantially compared with their past achievements and with the work of their peers. Perhaps because they started to value the "jet-set life" more than the happiness of their shareholders, celebrated CEOs also spent much more time pursuing projects like writing books and sitting on external boards. Most damningly, the authors add, "award-winning CEOs have significantly lower golf handicaps than non-winners."

—"Superstar CEOs," Ulrike Malmendier and Geoffrey Tate, *National Bureau of Economic Research*

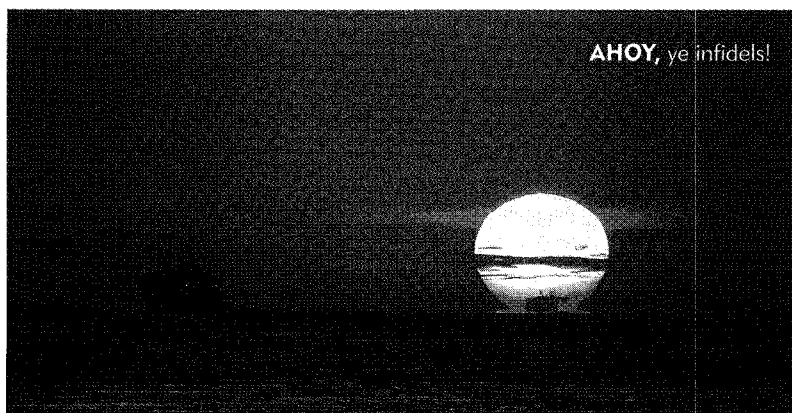


MEDIA

Seriously Funny

A moment of Zen: What if every news program was *The Daily Show*? A report from the Project for Excellence in Journalism suggests that audiences would actually be pretty well-informed. The researchers analyzed a year's worth of broadcasts and found that *The Daily Show*'s coverage roughly resembles that of cable news and talk radio, and that its popularity rivals or exceeds more-traditional news outlets. Though the show leans liberal—it attacked Republicans three times as often as Democrats and skewered the Bush administration in 22 percent of its segments—the authors suggest that its agenda could be "more anti-establishment than anti-Republican." And contrary to Bill O'Reilly's claim (made on *The Daily Show*) that its audience consists mainly of "stoned slackers," the show's viewers actually score in the highest percentile of current-events knowledge. The main divergence from the news cycle comes when tragedy strikes. The Virginia Tech massacre, one of last year's biggest stories, received only a brief mention before host Jon Stewart moved on, "to keep things light and funny." Even so, the report concludes that *The Daily Show* is a satire in the tradition of Art Buchwald and H. L. Mencken, and argues that it "performs a function that is close to journalistic in nature—getting people to think critically about the public square."

—"Journalism, Satire or Just Laughs? 'The Daily Show With Jon Stewart,' Examined," Project for Excellence in Journalism



TERRORISM

Arrrr-Qaeda

Pirates are increasingly marauding on the high seas, a Rand report finds, but the dreaded (and terrifying-sounding) "terrorism-piracy nexus" won't emerge anytime soon. Pirate attacks increased drastically between 2000 and 2006, to an average of more than 350 per year. In part, pirates just have more targets because of the huge boom in global maritime shipments. But they also take advantage of the shipping industry's growing dependence on a few dangerous "chokepoints" like the Strait of Malacca, as well as widespread government corruption and lax port security. Most conditions advantageous to piracy would seem to benefit terrorists as well, and rumors of extremists hijacking ships to train

for a "9/11 at sea" have led to worries that terrorists might start subcontracting their work to buccaneers. But the author argues that such a partnership is highly improbable. For one thing, terrorism in remote stretches of the ocean is unlikely to generate spectacular news footage. And no single attack would be likely to have wide-ranging economic consequences (for all their plundering, pirates cause at most \$16 billion in losses a year—in an industry that handled upward of \$7 trillion worth of goods in 2005). Perhaps most important, while jihadists would presumably aim for the destruction of the maritime economy, pirates depend on it for their livelihood.

—"The Maritime Dimension of International Security: Terrorism, Piracy, and Challenges for the United States," Peter Chalk, *Rand Corporation*

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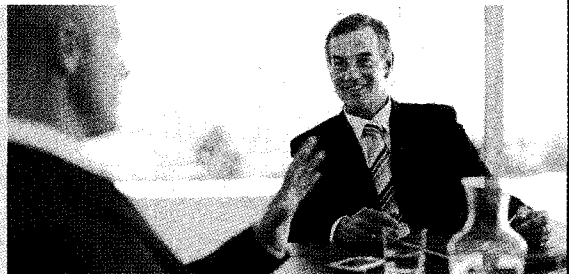
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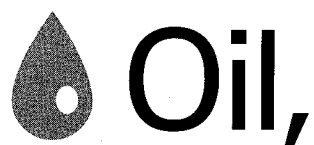
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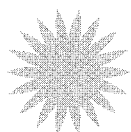
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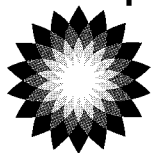


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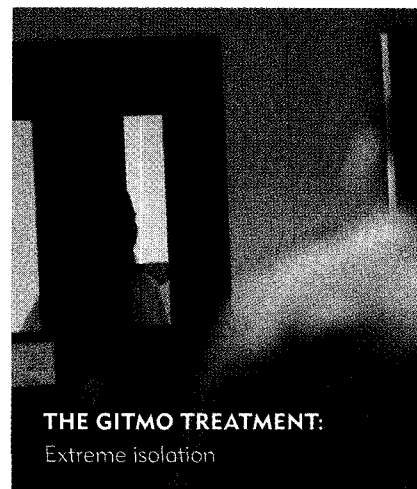
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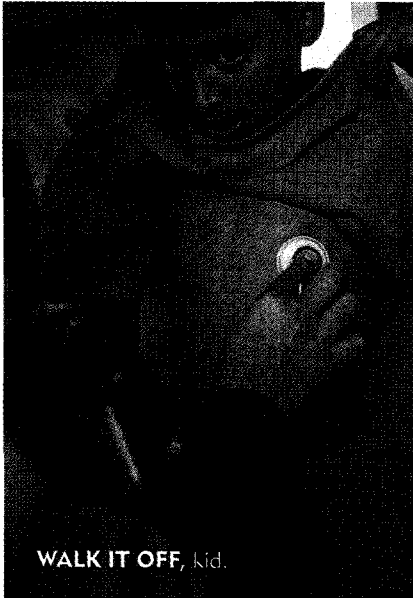
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Alone

Walid is a 28-year-old Palestinian who has been imprisoned in Guantánamo Bay since 2002. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, he suffers delusions, anxiety, and depression as a result of his isolation, and he appears to have developed schizophrenia. Like Walid, most detainees at Guantánamo live in conditions that resemble those of supermax prisons in the U.S. But unlike in supermaxes, where prisoners can have TVs in their cells and occasional interaction with the outside world, in Guantánamo, detainees (none of whom have been convicted) are usually locked up alone with only a Koran and a single other book for 22 hours a day. No prisoner has ever received a visit from a friend or relative, and many have never been allowed a phone call. While detainees can sometimes communicate with each other by shouting through door slits, guards remain their primary source of interaction. The study cites evidence that such isolation can produce "the most extreme forms of psychopathology, such as depersonalization, hallucination, and delusions." Lawyers report that some detainees are no longer able to assist in their own defense or make decisions about their case. Though many detainees pose major security risks, the study argues that prolonged isolation "can aggravate desperate behavior, potentially creating worse security problems over time," and that mental illnesses will "complicate ongoing efforts to resettle or repatriate many of these men."

—"Locked Up Alone: Detention Conditions and Mental Health at Guantanamo," Human Rights Watch

LOUIE PALU



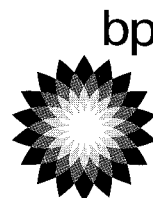
FOREIGN AFFAIRS **Heal Thyselves**

Access to health care has improved significantly in the developing world over the past few decades. In Delhi, India, for example, a typical family now lives within walking distance of more than 70 private health-care providers. But a new study by a group of economists suggests that quality of care is just as important as availability—and when it comes to quality in low-income countries, doctors are still failing miserably. The authors observed practitioners on the job in four countries and quizzed them about how they would treat various conditions. In one scenario, they were given the hypothetical example of a mother who brought in an infant suffering from diarrhea. Only 25 percent of doctors in Delhi asked about blood or mucus in the baby's stool, and only 7 percent checked for a depression in the soft spots on its skull—two key steps to determining whether the child should be hospitalized for severe dehydration. The authors also found that Indian doctors, who see patients for an average of 3.8 minutes, would have to be of above-average competence in order to be more likely to help patients than to harm them. In all the countries studied, the authors found "a large and significant gap between what doctors know they should do ... and what they actually do."

—"The Quality of Medical Advice in Low-Income Countries," Jishnu Das, Jeffrey Hammer, and Kenneth Leonard, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*

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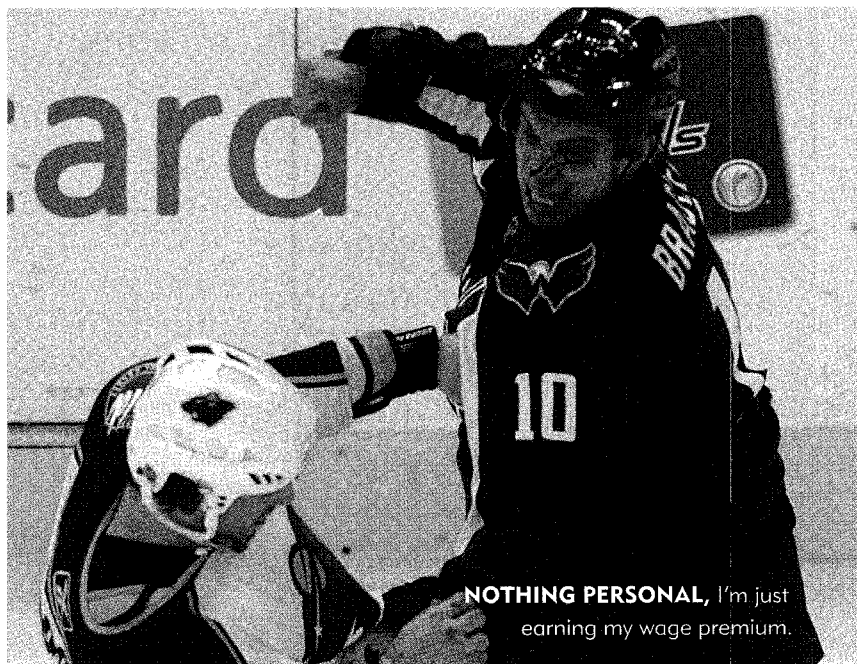
SOCIETY

Angry Young Women

Cable news may be obsessed with YouTube videos of "catfighting" high-school cheerleaders, but "there is no burgeoning national crisis of increasing serious violence among adolescent girls," a study by the Justice Department says. The researchers examined official arrest statistics from the FBI as well as data from two national self-reported crime surveys and found that while teenage girls have not been acting more violently over the past two decades, they are getting arrested much more frequently. The authors

believe the discrepancy is due more to shifts in enforcement than to girls' behavior. The adoption of "zero tolerance" policies for school altercations and "mandatory arrest" for domestic disturbances may have contributed, as may have differing behavioral expectations for females, such as a lower tolerance among parents for girls' acting out than for boys'. Another reason may be that while boys tend to fight "friends or strangers," girls are far more likely to assault family members, which might be more likely to land them in the clink.

—"Violence by Teenage Girls: Trends and Context," U.S. Department of Justice



NOTHING PERSONAL, I'm just earning my wage premium.

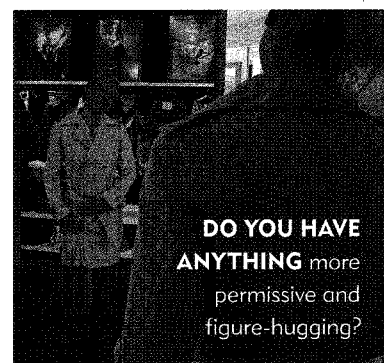
SPORTS

Mad Cash

When you think of hockey, you probably think black eyes, missing teeth, and bloody brawls. And although the NHL has tried various schemes to clean up its image—to the dismay of many fans—a study by two economists found that the sport still offers "enormous incentives for foul play and overt violence," and even a cash enticement for goons to drop their gloves. After analyzing league statistics—including penalty minutes, goals scored, and salary figures—the authors determined that strategic fighting can improve a team's playoff chances, and that players possessing the unique skills of an enforcer are

duly rewarded for their efforts. By fighting, lower-skilled wing players can create scoring opportunities for more-talented centers by intimidating opposing teams and keeping their skilled defenders in the penalty box. While a player earns a "wage premium" of \$10,925 when he assists on a goal, they calculated, he earns \$18,135 for winning a fight and \$11,993 even for losing a fight. To ensure that the sport values skill and finesse over "bad boy" enforcers, they suggest that the league deduct a "fight fine" of roughly \$36,000 from the team's salary-cap allotment for each donnybrook.

—"Blood Money: Incentives for Violence in NHL Hockey," John P. Haisken-DeNew and Matthias Vorell, Ruhr Economic Papers



DO YOU HAVE
ANYTHING more
permissive and
figure-hugging?

PSYCHOLOGY

Dressed to Impress

What makes a woman pick out a sparkling bracelet and low-cut top in the morning, rather than a button-down shirt and slacks? A new study suggests it may be hormones. Researchers have previously found that a woman's sexual motivation ebbs and flows over the course of her menstrual cycle, peaking just before ovulation, when she's most fertile. Now, two German psychologists find that women don more provocative clothing during the five days before ovulation, when sex is on the brain. The psychologists asked 40 women to evaluate their own attractiveness and clothing style over the course of a month. Each day, the women noted whether they thought their clothing choice was "sexy," "figure-hugging," or "permissive" and took snapshots of themselves. Although they didn't report feeling more or less attractive in a cyclic pattern, the women did rate themselves as more provocatively dressed during their "high fertile phases." The opposite sex seemed to agree: when instructed to peruse the photographs the women had taken, men found them both more provocatively dressed and more attractive during the days before ovulation—suggesting that the partners the women hoped to attract (consciously or not) would have read their signals.

—"Self-Perceived and Observed Variations in Women's Attractiveness Throughout the Menstrual Cycle—A Diary Study," Sascha Schwarz and Manfred Hassebrauck, Evolution and Human Behavior

For links to the documents discussed in this section, visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200809/primarysources.

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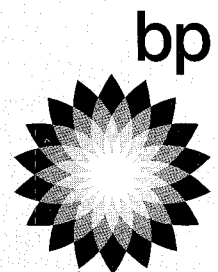
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- INDUSTRIAL, RESIDENTIAL, AND AUTOMOTIVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY INITIATIVES
- OTHER

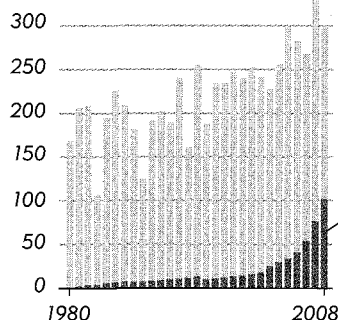
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U.S. CORN PRODUCTION

350 million metric tons



More than 1/3 of this year's domestic corn production is expected to be used to make ethanol.

The Butterfly Effect: Last year, U.S. farmers reduced soybean acreage by 16 percent to make way for more corn for ethanol production. The price of soy oil rose 40 percent, and as consumers switched to other vegetable oils, such as palm oil, their prices rose too. In January 2008, 10,000 Indonesians protested the rising price of tofu, palm oil, and other staples. One senior Indonesian official has worried publicly that continued unrest might lead to the government's overthrow.

THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

How scarcity, affluence, and biofuel production are wreaking havoc on food prices

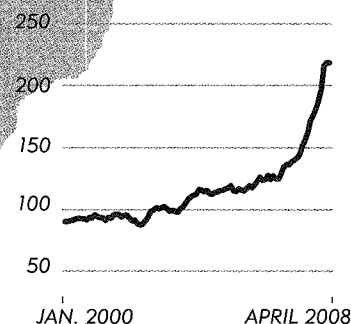
- Significant biofuel mandates or subsidies
- Especially vulnerable to instability due to rising food and fuel prices*
- Food exports limited or banned in response to escalating prices

*As indicated by the UN

A Lost Generation? Short-term spikes in food prices can have enduring consequences. Choosing cheaper, less nutritious food for children younger than 2 can lead to stunted height and weight, a compromised immune system, and intellectual impairment.

UNITED NATIONS WORLD FOOD-PRICE INDEX

100 equals average price from 1998-2000



The Great Disruption

BY ELIZABETH CHILES SHELburnE

Oil has long been regarded as the commodity with the most potential for economic mischief, and the one around which much of the world's geopolitics revolves. But food is making a case for itself this year.

Riots and protests over food prices have broken out in 30 countries since 2007. Haiti's prime minister was tossed out of office in April, largely because of protests over the price of food, and the Malaysian government is looking none too stable for similar reasons. In South

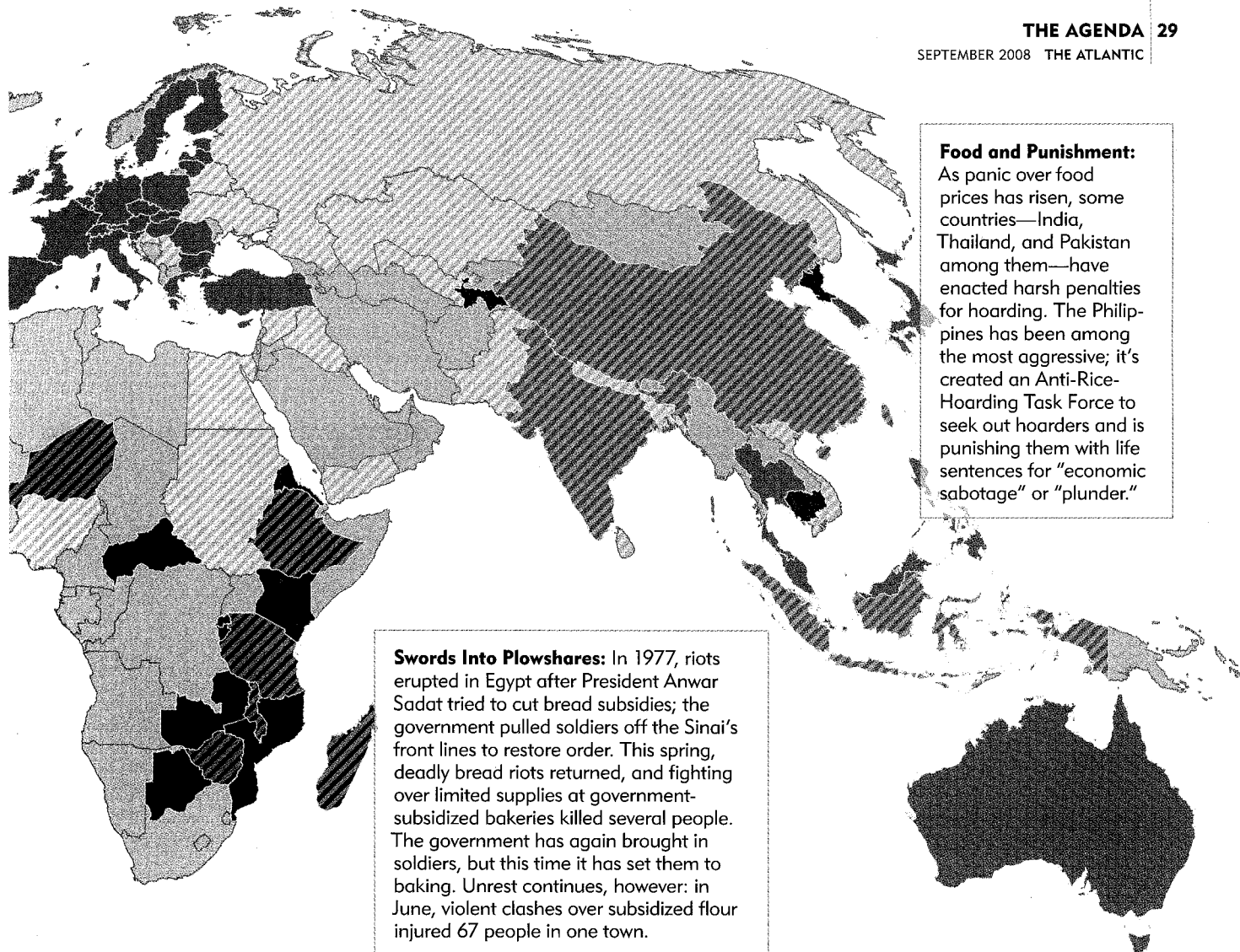
Africa, discontent over soaring food and fuel prices provided the spark for violence that killed dozens of illegal immigrants last spring. Even in the United States, wholesalers such as Costco limited the amount of rice each person could buy, unsettling some consumers. It's possible that the most consequential price spike of 2008 will be in food, not oil.

High food prices, like high oil prices, are partly the result of rising demand by a larger, wealthier world population. But

food-supply problems have also contributed to the recent spike in prices, and food has become a source of international tension.

The growth of the global food market has meant more food for billions of people, yet it has also led to a greater concentration of supply. In 2006, the top five oil producers supplied 43 percent of the world's oil. By comparison, the top five corn producers grew 77 percent of the world's supply; rice producers, 73 percent; beef and wheat producers, 66 percent each. Because of this concentration, a supply disruption in even one place can ripple through the food market worldwide.

Some disruptions are unavoidable. Last year, for instance, drought in Australia, a major wheat exporter, helped

**Food and Punishment:**

As panic over food prices has risen, some countries—India, Thailand, and Pakistan among them—have enacted harsh penalties for hoarding. The Philippines has been among the most aggressive; it's created an Anti-Rice-Hoarding Task Force to seek out hoarders and is punishing them with life sentences for "economic sabotage" or "plunder."

Swords Into Plowshares: In 1977, riots erupted in Egypt after President Anwar Sadat tried to cut bread subsidies; the government pulled soldiers off the Sinai's front lines to restore order. This spring, deadly bread riots returned, and fighting over limited supplies at government-subsidized bakeries killed several people. The government has again brought in soldiers, but this time it has set them to baking. Unrest continues, however: in June, violent clashes over subsidized flour injured 67 people in one town.

drive up wheat prices by nearly 100 percent. But some disruptions are the result of political decisions. For example, in response to the high wheat prices, India, then the world's second-largest rice exporter, decided to rely on rice, not wheat, for its public food program—and instituted a ban on most rice exports. Vietnam and Egypt, fearing local rice shortages, quickly followed suit. The result was a seize-up in the global market for rice: prices rose from \$333 a ton in 2006 to \$963 a ton in May of 2008.

The creation of politically popular bio-fuel mandates by many of the world's biggest farming nations has been particularly disruptive. U.S. law, for instance, requires that ethanol make up at least 5 percent of vehicle fuel (rising to 22 percent by 2022), and 30 percent of U.S. corn went

toward ethanol production last year. The U.S. government has claimed that biofuel demand is responsible for only 3 percent of the increase in global food prices over the past year. But a recent World Bank report estimated that figure to be 75 percent once the resulting economic changes, such as shifts in land use, are considered.

High prices hurt poor, import-dependent nations the most. The price hikes of the past three years threaten to push 100 million people back into poverty, according to the World Bank, erasing seven years of progress.

Prices are anticipated to come down from the panic-driven highs of earlier this year, but many experts believe they will remain far higher than in recent decades. Growth in agricultural productivity is not expected to keep pace with

demand, and any new investment in agricultural research is unlikely to produce widespread results for a decade or more. This is "a new era of food pricing," says Joachim von Braun, head of the International Food Policy Research Institute.

The volatility of this new era—and the reliance of the global market on a few key countries—has stoked fears among many food-importing nations. The Philippines recently announced plans for rice self-sufficiency. And the Persian Gulf States, which know something about supply disruptions, have begun buying up land in Sudan and other countries; they intend to create "sovereign farms" to buffer themselves from the swings of the global market, and the whims of those countries that drive it. ▀

Elizabeth Chiles Shelburne is a writer based in Boston.

REPORT

How preparations for tomorrow's satellite wars
could ruin life as we know it today

Space Invaders

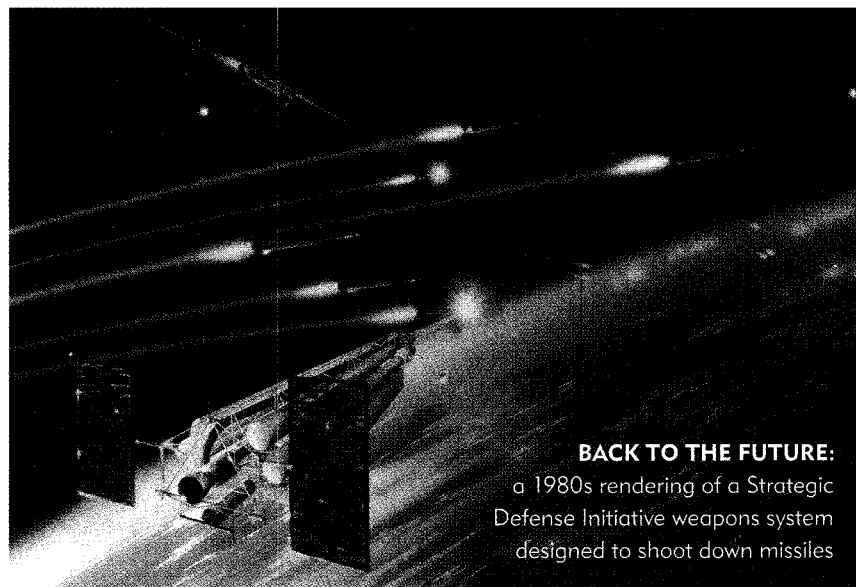
BY GUY GUGLIOTTA

On February 20, a U.S. Navy cruiser launched a single SM-3 missile that slammed into a failed spy satellite carrying a half ton of toxic rocket fuel about 130 miles over the Pacific. As advertised by the Pentagon in a Valentine's Day briefing, the destruction of the satellite was quick, clean, and complete. The impact blew the target to bits and vaporized the fuel; most of the debris was incinerated as it fell to Earth.

There was, however, one bit of alarming fallout: coming after China's earlier, successful test of an antisatellite missile on one of its own old weather satellites, the U.S. shootdown may have marked the opening of a new arms race in space. Not only was the U.S. destruction of its own satellite less transparent and straightforward than billed, but it looks to have been part of a larger U.S. effort, mostly out of public view, to develop antisatellite weapons and to militarize space, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

The world has twice decided that allowing weapons in space is a bad idea. Early dreams of using nuclear warheads to destroy enemy satellites foundered because neither the United States nor the Soviet Union could figure out how to keep the explosions from also damaging their own spacecraft. In the Outer Space Treaty, signed in 1967, both sides agreed to ban weapons of mass destruction in space. Then, in the 1980s, after many antisatellite tests with nonnuclear weapons, the two superpowers stopped destructive testing. Development was too expensive, and kills could send debris zooming into other satellites.

That de facto moratorium lasted until China's test on January 11, 2007. China's interest in antisatellite weapons had



BACK TO THE FUTURE:
a 1980s rendering of a Strategic
Defense Initiative weapons system
designed to shoot down missiles

quicken after the 1991 Gulf War showcased the accuracy of U.S. space-guided weapons. With the military playing field tilted sharply in favor of the United States, antisatellite weapons could be a leveler. In 2008, the United States had 444 military and commercial satellites in orbit, while the rest of the world, including the United States in partnership in some cases, had 403. China had 43.

The United States, of course, has long been aware that its broad array of potential targets makes it vulnerable. Many U.S. experts have suggested protecting space assets by seeking international agreements and waiting for other nations to build more satellites until they, too, are equally worried about the prospect of losing them. The Bush administration, however, is not fond of treaties. It sees space policy as another case of us-against-them.

The guiding spirit behind this beligerence was Donald Rumsfeld, who

chaired a commission set up by Congress in 1999 to assess America's vulnerability in space. He resigned in December 2000, when President Bush picked him as defense secretary; two weeks later, the commission released its findings.

The report warned of a "space Pearl Harbor" and urged the United States to "develop and deploy the means to deter and defend against hostile acts directed at U.S. space assets." It noted that international law did not prohibit "placing or using weapons in space." In 2006, true to Rumsfeld's vision, the administration's new National Space Policy emphasized a U.S. right to preserve "capabilities and freedom of action in space," and to "deny such freedom of action to adversaries"—we do what we want, and the rest of the world does what we say.

It was a bureaucratic tour de force: Rumsfeld had crafted an aggressive new vision for militarizing space; changed jobs and accepted his own findings; and

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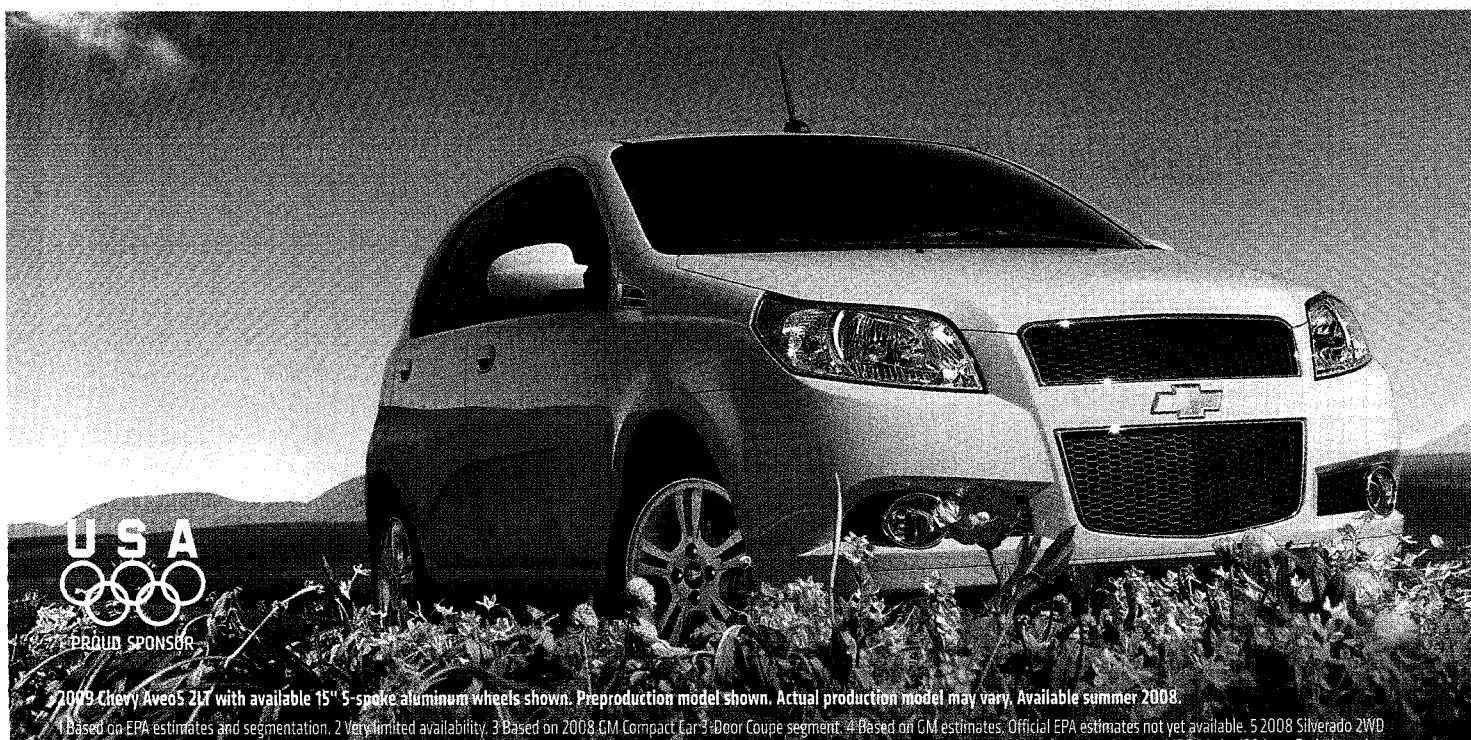


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defined his president's space policy, all without meaningful public debate.

Since then, the Bush administration has kept plans for new or expanded space-weapons programs mostly under wraps. The most visible program is a recurring Pentagon proposal—not funded by Congress so far this year—to spend \$268 million over five years on a missile-defense system that attacks enemy ballistic launches with interceptors fired from space. But not only is at least half of the space budget “black,” as in classified, almost all space technology is “dual use,” muddying the distinction between civilian and military applications. Next year, for example, the Air Force has budgeted \$74 million for the “Experimental Satellite Series” (small satellites that would drive around space, inspecting, servicing, or perhaps destroying other spacecraft) and the Starfire Optical Range (a ground-based laser system at New Mexico's Kirtland Air Force Base that tracks satellites but could easily “dazzle,” “blind,” or burn up enemy spacecraft in orbit).

All told, the national-security space budget is somewhere between \$25 billion and \$30 billion per year, estimates the Center for Defense Information, a think tank that tracks space spending. That may amount to “chump change” for the Pentagon, in the words of the center's director, Theresa Hitchens, who is a critic of space weapons, but it would buy nearly two years of civilian space exploration at NASA.

One clue to what the United States plans to do about space weapons may be its February shootdown of the failed spy satellite. Officials stressed that, unlike China a year earlier, the United States was eliminating a toxic hazard, not conducting a test. Moreover, they said, the United States told the world all about the mission before it took place.

But in reality, China's “surprise” launch was not all that surprising. The Pentagon and U.S. intelligence agencies had watched silently as the Chinese fired two earlier antisatellite missiles—misses or dry runs—before hitting the target on the third try. The administration stood by, one former senior official said, because

it had concluded that nothing it could say would deter the test, so why bother? Besides, watching a Chinese hit might offer valuable intelligence.

Moreover, U.S. “transparency” turned out to be not all that transparent. A year passed between the failure of the spy satellite immediately after its launch in December 2006 and the administration's request to Strategic Command to do something about it, and it was late January 2008 before U.S. officials publicly warned of the satellite's imminent reentry. Still, they downplayed the risk. On Valentine's Day, however, briefers told a different story: extensive analysis had led President Bush to conclude that the rocket fuel, a highly toxic compound called hydrazine, significantly threatened human life—enough to spend \$112 million to destroy the satellite with a modified missile-defense interceptor.

But not until several months after the test did NASA and Strategic Command release (exclusively to *The Atlantic*) even part of the analysis that had led Bush to that conclusion. Geoffrey Forden, an MIT physicist who examined the documentation, said that although incomplete, it suggested to him that atmospheric drag would melt most of the hydrazine and destroy the fuel tank itself before landing, eliminating any hazard. His own independent analysis had earlier suggested only a 3.5 percent chance that the reentry of the satellite and its toxic fuel would kill or injure anyone.

The failure to provide a rigorous threat analysis in a timely manner raises suspicions that the United States did nothing to stop China's antisatellite test because it would provide political cover for our own future test. Even if this was not the case, the intercept offered the United States the policy equivalent of a threefer: save the world from hydrazine, test a missile-defense rocket as an antisatellite weapon, and put the Chinese on notice that we can kill satellites, too.

Looking to enhance the profile of military space, the Pentagon has found the Chinese test to be a gift that keeps on giving. In early 2007, the head of Strategic Command, General James Cartwright,

told a Senate subcommittee that although “it is premature to start thinking about an arms race in space,” China's test showed that the U.S. needed to invest in a variety of systems. These included quick ground-based counterstrikes to disable enemy antisatellite jammers and lasers, and better space-based sensors to detect these attacks and perhaps enable the United States to forestall them by going “proactive.” During the NCAA basketball tournament last April, the Air Force began running a recruitment ad featuring an exploding satellite: “What if your cell-phone calls, your television, your GPS system, even your bank transactions, could be taken out with a single missile?” the narrator intoned. “They can.” Signaling that interest in weapons in space is bipartisan and promises to outlive the Bush administration, the Democrat-controlled Congress has ordered the Pentagon and the director of National Intelligence to develop a “Space Protection Strategy.”

Both China and the United States should recall why the superpowers stopped destructive testing in the 1980s. Blow up a few dozen satellites with the same abandon as the Chinese did last year, and a belt of space junk will soon circle the heavens. Unchecked by atmospheric drag and largely free of gravity, debris will zip through space at speeds up to 25,000 miles an hour, turning other multimillion-dollar satellites into extraterrestrial roadkill. No more space-guided cruise missiles. But also, no more instant weather, drought, or flood reports; no more GPS; no more space station; no more space telescopes; no more satellite radio; no more DirecTV. Human spaceflight? Maybe, if you like dodging objects while traveling at 25,000 miles an hour. Those of us old enough to remember the 1950s might welcome the return of the pre-*Sputnik* era, but probably not. Space war may not trigger nuclear winter, but it promises the end of technological life as we know it. ▀

Guy Gugliotta, a former science, space, and congressional reporter for *The Washington Post*, is now a writer based in New York.

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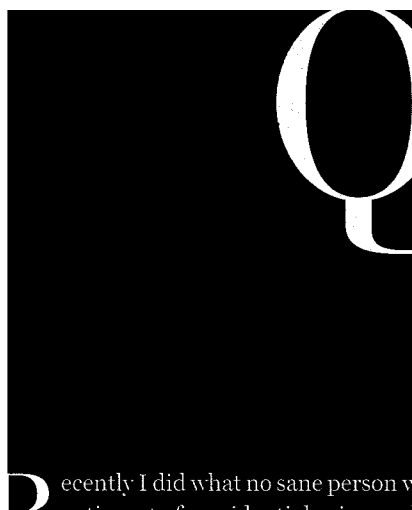
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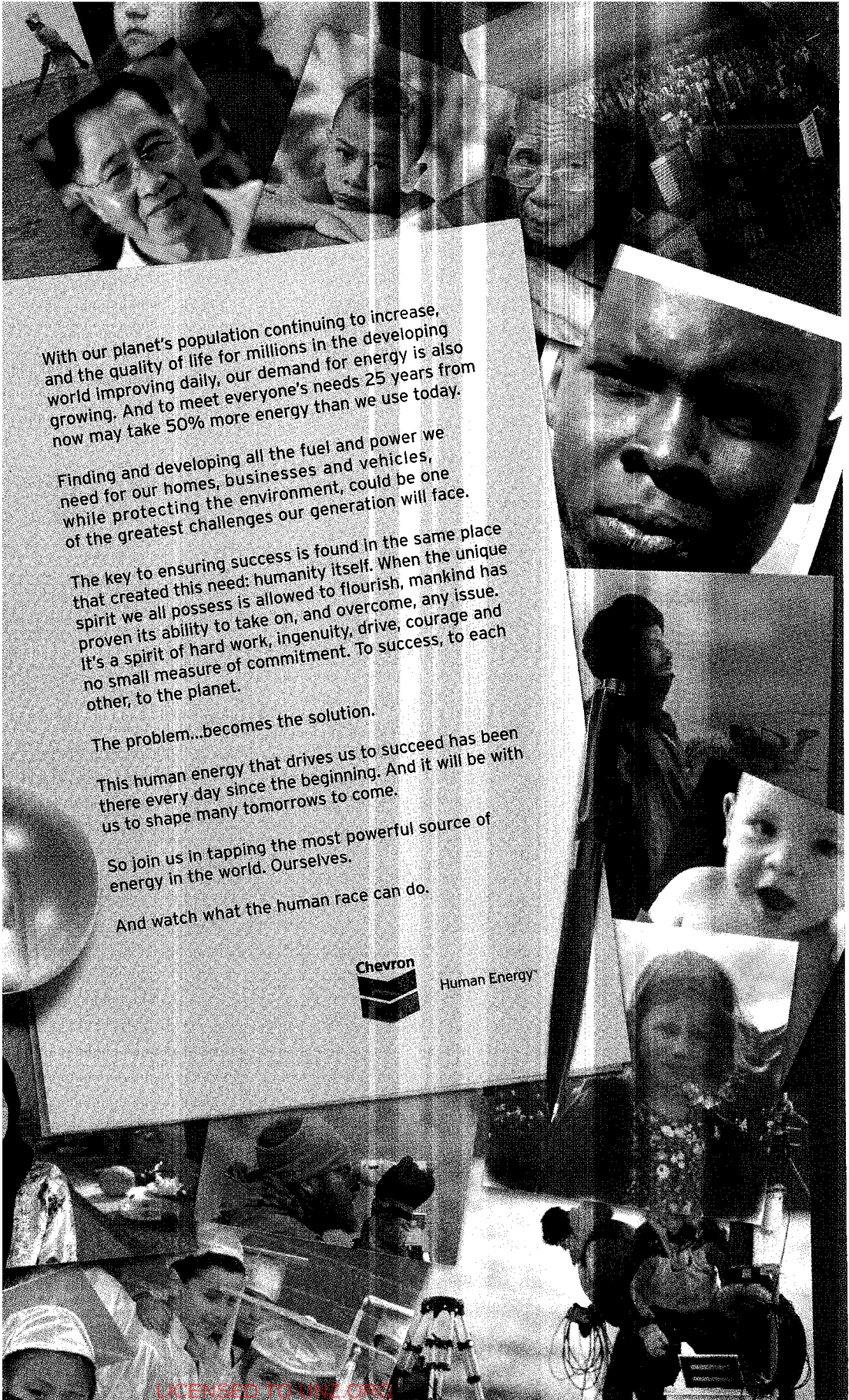
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Who will win the presidential debates? What does each candidate's use of words say about how he would govern as president? Can Obama's rhetorical skills lift him to the heights of Lincoln, FDR, and Reagan—or will his speechmaking do him in? After watching all 47 (!) of the primary season's debates, our correspondent has the answers—and some harsh criticism for the moderators.





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There have been nine series of televised general-election debates. These started with Kennedy-Nixon in 1960, resumed with Ford-Carter in 1976, and have been a campaign fixture ever since. In all but one election, the debates produced a moment that figured in the ultimate outcome. (The exception was Clinton-Dole in 1996, when neither man said anything that changed a voter's mind.) The dramatic exchanges that made a difference—Ronald Reagan's amused and dismissive "There you go again" against Jimmy Carter in 1980, Michael Dukakis's too-composed look when asked in 1988 how he would react if his wife were raped, George H. W. Bush's desperate "when will this end?" glance at his wristwatch during a town-hall session with Bill Clinton and Ross Perot in 1992, Al Gore's operatic sighs about George W. Bush in 2000—would have passed unnoticed in a transcript. The transcript conveys only part of, for example, the alarming meandering in Ronald Reagan's soliloquy at the end of his second 1984 debate with Walter Mondale. Reagan, looking confused and forgetting his point, was rescued only when the moderator, Edwin Newman, announced that time was up: "Mr. President, I'm obliged to cut you off there, under the rules of the debate. I'm sorry." Mondale should have been sorry, too.

I paid more attention to the Democrats, and will concentrate on them here, because their debates went on three months longer, mattered more, and revealed more about them as possible leaders. What the debates did for the Republicans was eliminate one candidate, on grounds of sheer torpor: Fred Thompson. They gave another, Ron Paul, a platform for ongoing Internet-based influence and elevated a third, Mike Huckabee, out of the fringe category, thanks to his sounding wittier and more amiable than the other candidates. John McCain gave clues to what he will do this fall, but nothing he said in the debates was a key to his success in winning the nomination, nor were Rudy Giuliani's and Mitt Romney's debate performances pivotal in their failures.

For the Democrats, though, the debates were dramatic in themselves and important in shaping the result. Hillary Clinton seriously blew only one answer of the countless hundreds she delivered. That was her fumbling response on whether she thought illegal immigrants should get driver's licenses—delivered 100 minutes into a late-night debate in Philadelphia last October, when she looked drained. As with Gerald Ford's famous fumbled comments about Eastern Europe when debating Jimmy Carter in 1976, what she *meant* to say was obvious. Ford meant to say that the Poles and others behind the Iron Curtain had an unconquerable spirit and would never accept Soviet domination. What he actually said, and dug himself in on, was that they were free.

What Clinton meant to say was that then-Governor Eliot Spitzer of New York, in proposing licenses for illegal immigrants so as to regulate their safety on the roads, was making

the best of a bad situation created by the chaos of federal policy on immigration. The state of New York had no way to enforce a border-control policy of its own. So it was doing what it could to reduce the traffic risk.

What she actually said, and stuck to when atypically given several chances to clarify by the questioner, the late Tim Russert, was that Spitzer's plan made "a lot of sense" but wasn't "the best thing" to do, without indicating how those two views could coexist. In other circumstances, she would have batted away this issue as she routinely did much tougher questions. (The two signs that she was ready to dispose of a nuisance issue: "I've said many times ...," so whatever has come up can't be news; and "the real question is ...," the politician's standard way of shifting discussion back to more-favorable ground. Barack Obama's version of this tactic is to say "it's just common sense ...," indicating that what he's about to

McCain's tactics against Obama are obvious. He will try to remind Obama of Hillary Clinton—that is, of someone he must take seriously, someone who is willing to challenge and even insult him to his face.

say is restating the obvious and reasonable. "Look" or "listen" at the start of an answer is his version of "the real question is," a sign that he wants to answer something different from what was asked.) But in the real circumstances, the blog and cable-news controversy over her "stumble" and "equivocation" significantly cut her then-large national lead over Obama and gave him an opening.

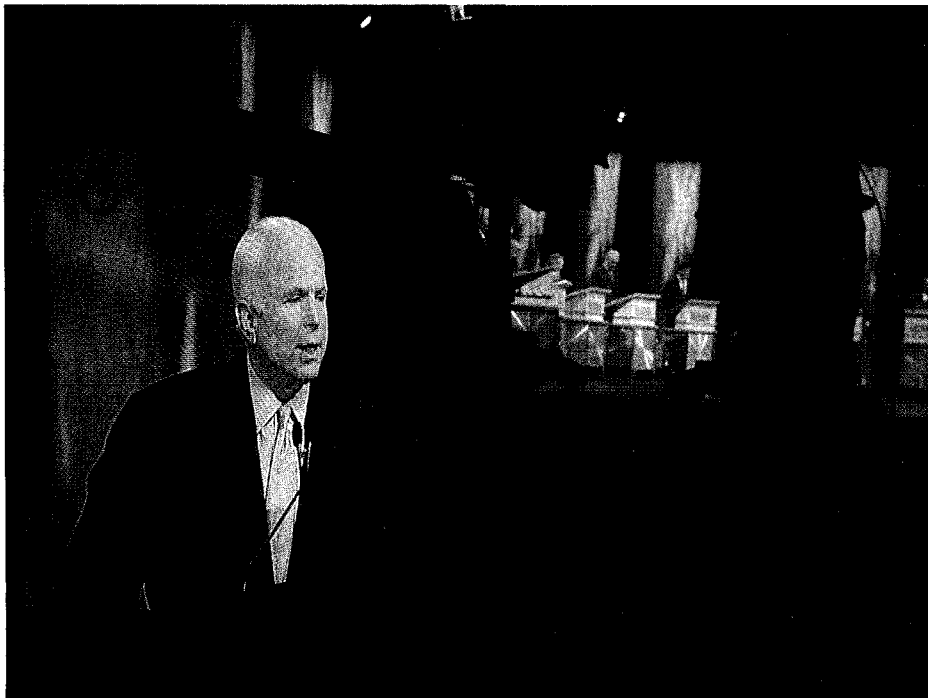
For Democrats, the season's debates produced more news and newsworthy quotes than those in past campaigns. Indeed, the most newsmaking comment that came from anywhere *except* a debate was Obama's remark at a California fund-raiser that economically strained and "bitter" people clung to their guns and God—which of course became a question for him at the subsequent debates.

And apart from their effect on the nomination contest that has ended, the Democratic debates show something unexpected about the general-election contest this fall. The conventional wisdom is that debates were Obama's great weak point. While Hillary Clinton time and again beat expectations, Obama never managed to put her away or receive big acclaim after a debate.

Because his major speeches were so influential, long, and carefully wrought, it seems natural to conclude that today's bear-baiting debates are just the wrong vehicle for him. "You've

got to remember, he is a constitutional-law professor," I was told by Newton Minow, who as chairman of the Federal Communications Commission under John F. Kennedy declared television a "vast wasteland" and who as a partner in the Chicago law firm Sidley Austin hired Obama as a summer associate 19 years ago. "He's used to seeing all sides of an issue, and he tends to lay out all sides before giving his own view." By that time, the clock has run out.

That's true, but it can't be the whole answer. There was a time when he seemed naturally suited to rapid-fire debate, as I found by watching an earlier and less familiar set of Obama's debate performances. The contrast is not as stark as one I discussed in an article before the presidential debates of 2004,



which concerned George W. Bush's transformation from the on-point and seemingly silver-tongued Texas politician who bested Democratic opponents in gubernatorial debates in the 1990s to the aphasic figure we have known on the national scene. But it is readily apparent. The Obama who took on the Republican ambassador, perennial presidential candidate, talk-show host, and motormouth Alan Keyes in the Illinois Senate debates of 2004—a relaxed, funny politician unafraid to go jab for jab—differed noticeably from the surprisingly tentative, slow-to-attack candidate who survived but did not triumph through this season's debates.

I won't contend that Beijing, over a shaky Internet connection, is the ideal vantage point from which to follow every nuance of a primary campaign. But living at a remove from day-by-day coverage on TV and minute-by-minute chatter in Washington can highlight certain trends and details that are easily lost in the ongoing wash of news. For me, it had the effect of clarifying the strengths and occasional weaknesses created

by Obama's rhetorical style; suggesting what he has to fear in the debates with John McCain; and indicating how rhetoric might affect his governing style if he wins. It also provided a surprisingly sharp reminder of the latest twist in the story of the press's role in helping choose our president.

I. THE CARNIVAL

The 40-plus people who served as moderators through the debate season varied widely in their assertiveness and willingness to act as if the assembled politicians were just another set of guests on a talk show. Local newspeople plus those from PBS and NPR tended to be the most respectful. Wolf Blitzer was the most intrusive and self-aggrandizing. His CNN colleague Anderson Cooper, who moderated the YouTube debates for both parties with video questions from viewers, was at the other extreme, with a nice combination of assertiveness and good-humored restraint. Along with Cooper, the other moderator who best kept control without hogging the stage was Brian Williams of NBC. Williams was in charge of the very first Democratic debate, on April 26 of last year, in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Yet it was the smooth, non-histrionic Williams who put the candidates through a series of stunts.

Raise your hand if you've owned a gun. Raise your hand if you "believe there is such a thing as a global war on terror." Raise your hand if you support Repre-

sentative Dennis Kucinich's plan to impeach Dick Cheney. On the merits, these were not really ideal yes/no questions—especially the most important of them, about the war on terror, in which the only things that matter are the reasoning and plans that would come after the yes or the no. But the amazing part of this process was the sheer indignity of it. All eight of these people had been public officials. Odds were that one among them would be the next president of the United States. Yet they compliantly held up their hands like grade-schoolers or contestants on *Fear Factor*. While candidates are subjected to almost everything during a long primary season and are used to skepticism and outright hostility from the press, serving as game-show props represented something new.

Brian Williams asked many meaty questions that night, and his bearing through that and two other debates was respectful without being cowed. Indeed, if you read the transcripts, you can find all the meat you want—about different concepts for mandates in health-care proposals, different

concepts for the future in Iraq, different ways of dealing with federal budget deficits. Whenever they could, candidates steered the discussion back to policies and real-world problems, attacking their opponents mainly when goaded to do so by questioners. The candidates were anxious about staying ahead of their competitors; the moderators were anxious about generating enough excitement to get scenes from the debate onto the next day's news. The candidates would be coming back for more debates; the moderators had only a chance or two to make a splash. So even Williams, one of the steadiest of them, acted in one of the ways that made this year's primary debates different from anything American politics had seen before.

Unlike in any previous campaign of the TV-debate era, neither side in this year's primaries had an incumbent president or vice president who could be coy about agreeing to debate with challengers. All of the candidates needed airtime at least as much as the news outlets and interest groups needed them. With no incumbents or favorites who could afford to be reluctant, the advantages were on the inviters' side. The AFL-CIO got most of the candidates to show up. So did AARP; Univision, for a debate that was simulcast in Spanish; and Logo, the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) network. And Daily Kos. Cable outlets covered those forums, and held their own debates too. Even though far fewer people watch primary debates—they typically draw 2 to 3 million viewers, versus the 60 million or more who watch general-election debates—any time on TV is a plus during primary season, when candidates are otherwise speaking to small groups in living rooms and shaking hands in diners.

Those cable outlets are themselves under pressure. The national audience is much more fractured and polarized than it was during the Dole-Clinton campaign. Being smaller, the cable shows and hosts must be noisier to be noticed. A cruel fact of media life, which I checked by reading coverage of the debates, is that no one will write a big story about a debate in which candidates explain their views on health insurance. In a Republican debate last fall in Dearborn, Michigan, Chris Matthews, of MSNBC, asked Fred Thompson to name the prime minister of Canada. Thompson got it—"Harper ... Prime Minister Harper"—but, Matthews told me, "Sometimes you have the sense that someone doesn't know, and it would have been a very big story in the Canadian press, up there on the border, if he didn't."

Dealing with surprise and displaying spot knowledge are advantages in politics, and knowing who is the elected leader of America's largest trading partner should be a minimum qualification for the presidency. But the impulse Matthews had—normal answers won't get coverage, a gaffe will—emerges through the boxed-set debate season as a powerful theme in the moderators' performances, and is apparent even in Williams's relatively restrained one. "The goal is to have clips on other people's shows," Todd Gitlin, of Columbia's Journalism School, told me.

In January of this year, two Hillary Clinton staffers—Sidney Blumenthal, who had been a close counselor to Bill Clinton and was even closer to his wife; and a law student named Daniel Freifeld—produced a taxonomy of the Democratic debates to that point. Their internal memo began, in all caps:

15 DEBATES

352 QUESTIONS

29 GOTCHA QUESTIONS

33 PUFF QUESTIONS

7 GOVERNANCE QUESTIONS

NOT A SINGLE QUESTION ABOUT A FEDERAL
DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY AND ITS CONDITION
UNDER BUSH

"Gotcha" questions were the familiar attempt to find any difference between a candidate's position today and what he or she had ever said before. "Puffs" were open-ended speculative questions: "What is your favorite Bible verse?" all of the Democrats were asked at the end of a debate in New Hampshire on September 26. "Governance" questions, of course, concerned how the trillion-dollar federal enterprise does its work (though the category excluded questions about the military's performance in Iraq).

By the time I'd finished watching the debates, I had a similar impression to Blumenthal and Freifeld's, but with a different organizational scheme. Here is my list of the Five Questions That Should Never Be Asked, with illustrations and reasons why they're wrong:

1. The *will you pledge tonight* question, which is always about something no responsible politician could ever flat-out promise to do. For instance, a question to Barack Obama: "Will you pledge that by January 2013, the end of your first term more than five years from now, there will be no U.S. troops in Iraq?" Obama's reply was the only realistic one: "It's hard to project four years from now, and I think it would be irresponsible. We don't know what contingency will be out there." Hillary Clinton got the same question and gave a similar answer: "I agree with Barack. It is very difficult to know what we're going to be inheriting. You know, we do not know, walking into the White House in January 2009, what we're going to find." The questioner looked as if these were witnesses evading a question. In fact, if they'd said anything different, they'd be indicating that they were too doctrinaire for the job. But that didn't get Clinton off the hook. "Would you pledge to the American people that Iran will not develop a nuclear bomb while you are president?" she was asked at another debate. She replied, "I intend to do everything I can to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb," to which the follow-up was: "But you won't pledge?" Then to Senator Joseph Biden: "Would you pledge to the American people that Iran would not build a nuclear bomb on your watch?" Biden's reply: "I would pledge to keep us safe." Taking a pledge would mean news for the show but



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would either handcuff the politician if elected or create a flip-flop trap later on.

2. The *gotcha* question, involving any change of policy. A challenge to former Senator John Edwards in a debate last September: "Well, Senator, I want to ask you this because in 2004 when you ran for president, you said we could not afford universal health care, it was not achievable, and it was not responsible. You've changed dramatically on this issue." Edwards's perfect response: "That's true, and so has America." Some changes are suspicious; others reflect a recognition of new facts. The *gotcha* questioner treats them all the same.
3. The *loaded hypothetical* question, which assumes factors that can't be known. One addressed to Hillary Clinton: "If Israel concluded that Iran's nuclear capability threatened Israel's security, would Israel be justified in launching an attack on Iran?" She replied, "I think that's one of those hypotheticals that—" and, over the questioner's interrupting "It's not a hypothetical, Senator. It's real life," she went on to say "that is better not addressed at this time." She, Biden, and Obama all challenged a similar hypothetical, straight out of 24, about whether they would torture a captive suspect who knew where a ticking bomb was stashed, saying that in reality torture didn't work and the scenario was too pat. The most famous combination of the *gotcha* and the *hypothetical* was of course the question CNN's Bernard Shaw asked of Michael Dukakis as the very first in a debate 20 years ago: "Governor, if Kitty Dukakis were raped and murdered, would you favor an irrevocable death penalty for the killer?"
4. The *raise your hand* question, for reasons of intellectual vulgarity and personal rudeness; and
5. The *lightning round*, in which the candidates have 30 seconds to address a point. After aggressive questioning in one debate, the moderator said, "We're going to take a break and come back with our lightning round—30 seconds to answer each question." Senator Chris Dodd shot back, "You never got to the real round." The transcript then shows: "SENATOR CLINTON: (Chuckles.)"

Here we come to an awkward fact. The questioner in all the illustrations above, starting with the favorite verse of the Bible, was Tim Russert of NBC. (I called Russert's office in Washington on a Tuesday to request an interview about his approach to debate questions. I was told that he was in Europe at the time and I should call back the following Monday. In between came the shocking news of his death.)

The generous personality that made Russert so popular, and the encyclopedic political knowledge that made him so influential, meant that he was imitated when he set a bad example as well as a good one. His questioning mode during the debates was mostly unfortunate. In two important,

back-to-back Democratic debates last fall—in Hanover, New Hampshire, in September and Philadelphia in October—nearly every question he asked was from the categories above.

The candidates fought back, even when that involved defending their political rivals. A few months earlier, in a June debate in New Hampshire sponsored by CNN, all of the candidates had pushed back harder against the less magisterial Wolf Blitzer. When Blitzer asked for a yes/no show of hands on whether "the United States should use military force to stop the genocide in Darfur," Clinton asked for details and then refused to answer. "We're not going to engage in these hypotheticals," she said. "I mean, one of the jobs of a president is being very reasoned in approaching these issues. And I don't think it's useful to be talking in these kind of abstract, hypothetical terms." The transcript conveys the reaction after he asked for another show of hands and Biden, Edwards, and Clinton complained at once:

BLITZER: I want everybody to raise their hand and tell me: If you agree that if the U.S. had intelligence that could take out Osama bin Laden and kill him, even though some innocent civilians would die in the process, would you, as president, authorize such an operation? If you would, raise your hand.

BIDEN: It would depend on how many innocent civilians ...

CLINTON: Yes, I mean, part of this is one of these hypotheticals, Wolf ...

EDWARDS: There's not information, not enough information.

CLINTON: ... that is very difficult to answer in the abstract.

"At some point, the politicians are going to take a pledge against these take-a-pledge and raise-your-hand questions," Chris Matthews told me. "It really does put them in a kind of junior position. It's up to one of them to have the fiber to say, 'No! I came here to provide information, not to perform at your beck and call.'" But when the show-of-hands question made its unwelcome debut in this season's debates, in the inaugural Brian Williams session, it appeared in a form that was hard for the candidates to duck without seeming evasive—whether they'd ever owned a gun—and by the time they saw what was happening, the pattern was set and there was no going back.

George Stephanopoulos of ABC, who moderated two of the three Democratic debates held on a major network rather than on cable, told me that the reason the debates became so process-oriented was that the policy differences among the main contenders were so small. This was especially true, he said, in the much-criticized final debate of the primaries, in which he and Charles Gibson spent the first 45 minutes grilling Obama and Clinton on "electability" issues like Obama's failure to wear an American-flag pin in his lapel, before turning to policy matters in the second half. "To the extent that they have

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relatively small differences over health-care policies, if either one becomes president those would all be subsumed" in negotiations with Congress, he said. "And as to whether originally they were for war in Iraq—that difference had been debated." The only thing left to discuss and for the party to consider, according to Stephanopoulos, was "which was more electable in November—that was the heart of the issue."

By that point, and about that debate, he was probably right. When I'd seen this final debate in real time, I'd been outraged by its harsh tone and belated attention to policy matters (including Gibson's little lecture to the candidates on why capital-gains tax cuts always paid for themselves). When I saw its place in the series, I realized it was like a late episode of *The Sopranos* in which nearly everyone gets mowed down. It was violent and dehumanizing, but it was the culmination of a long process.

II. THE FINALISTS

It is surprising how early the characters and plot lines for the debate series were set. In a sense, if you saw the first episode, with Brian Williams in South Carolina, you knew how the next 10 would go.

Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and John Edwards were already the figures of consequence, with the others in a variety of supporting roles. Biden and his Senate colleague Dodd started that night down the course that would let each of them achieve something unusual: lose a political race in a big, lopsided way but enhance his personal and political standing. (Morris Udall, in his losing race for the Democratic nomination against Jimmy Carter, and Paul Tsongas and Bruce Babbitt against Bill Clinton, did something comparable.) Biden did so by seeming personable and funny. When given his first tough question in this first debate—whether he could curb his tendency to filibuster and exaggerate and could "have the discipline you would need on the world stage"—he made his winningest reply of the entire campaign: the single word "Yes." Through the campaign, Dodd also moved into the nothing-to-lose jokey mode. In December, in the run-up to the Iowa caucuses, John Edwards starchily said in an NPR radio debate, "My kids will not have toys coming from China" for Christmas, presumably because they were tainted. Dodd, who had moved his wife and young children to Iowa during the campaign, instantly and sarcastically topped him: "My toys are coming from Iowa. I'm buying Iowa toys. They're going to eat Iowa food! Iowa toys!" It was the voice of someone about to get 1 percent of the vote but still sane enough to appreciate the absurdity of the endless primary campaign.

The pilot episode of the debate series established the other characters and their personalities, too: former Senator Mike Gravel and Representative Dennis Kucinich in the roles of

rabble-rouser and truth-teller. Governor Bill Richardson as the insider making outsider-type dramatic claims—in that first debate, that if he were president, he would order every single U.S. soldier out of Iraq by the end of the year.

In the top tier, Edwards was from the start in a class by himself. He was crisper than Hillary Clinton in making his points, sticking to his message, and turning any question to the topic he wanted to discuss. He was better attuned than Barack Obama to the dramatic and emotional elements of presenting his case. Political debates are more like jury trials than like tests of logic. You win by making onlookers believe *you*—and therefore your argument. No one watching the debates could wonder how Edwards had won so many trials—and if this had been a jury case, it would have been settled early on. His one real weakness as a debater was overuse of "my daddy was a mill worker" to introduce any discussion of economic matters.

Then the contest came down to Clinton and Obama. Their paired evolution under questioning was fascinating because each changed—in different and revealing ways.

What never changed about Hillary Clinton, except in the 30 seconds about driver's licenses that may have cost her so dearly, was her confidence and command of the facts. How

They compliantly held up their hands like grade-schoolers or contestants on *Fear Factor*. While candidates are used to skepticism and outright hostility from the press, serving as game-show props represented something new.

did she prepare for the debates? I asked Sidney Blumenthal. "She prepared by doing her job," he said. "These are issues that take years to master." He had in mind her ability to discuss anything, from the hidden mandates in Obama's "non-mandate" health plan (the ones requiring parents to insure their kids) to the history of dealings with Pakistan. No one would dream of asking her to name the prime minister of Canada, for fear of getting a response about her meetings with him and his three predecessors.

She could not be flapped and was never tongue-tied. When asked at the YouTube debate whether she was a "liberal," she instantly gave a concise explanation of why she preferred "the word 'progressive,' which has a real American meaning, going back to the Progressive Era at the beginning of the 20th century." Thus she avoided a dreaded label without disowning the liberal heritage. When Stephanopoulos opened a debate that was held on his Sunday-morning show by asking her bluntly if Obama was up to the job, she parried with, "Well, George, I was going to say good morning," getting a laugh, and then

eased into, “You know, I’m running on my own qualifications and experience.” Tim Russert surprised her by reading a statement about when a president might authorize torture, asking her opinion, and then revealing, after she disagreed with it, that the author was her husband. “Well, he’s not standing here right now,” she said after absolutely no pause—meaning not that she was talking behind his back but that she would speak for herself and for no one else.

She also used surprising dramatic skills to educe Barack Obama’s very worst moment in the debates. This was on January 5, a Saturday night, just after Obama’s startling victory in the Iowa caucuses and just before the New Hampshire primary, which Clinton suddenly needed to win lest she be swept away. Scott Spradling, of WMUR-TV in the host city of Manchester, New Hampshire, asked Clinton about poll findings that people respected her but didn’t like her.



“Well ... that hurts my feelings,” she said, with a sly smile that brought laughter from the crowd. “I’m sorry,” Spradling said, to applause. “I’m sorry!”

“But ... I’ll try to go on!”—this in perfect, mock-melodramatic tone that again won a big appreciative response from the crowd. She turned to Obama and, while she didn’t quite pat him on the leg, gave a comparable, admiring “what a guy!” expression while saying: “He’s very likable! I agree with that.” A pause, and a little smile. “I don’t think I’m that bad.” It couldn’t have been done better. To me, it was more “humanizing” than her teary-eyed moment at a campaign stop 36 hours later, because there was a playful element along with the hurt.

Obama looked flustered and blurted out his second-most-important line of the debates (we’ll get to the most important

soon): “You’re likable enough, Hillary.” “Thank you so much!” she said, less in irritation than surprise, and after nervous laughter in the room she swung into the “real question,” which of course concerned “who is ready to be president on Day One.”

The problem for Clinton is that while she was nearly always at the top of her game, the game she was playing changed debate by debate. In one encounter, she hailed Obama as a comrade in their joint struggle against the Bush administration and the media. In the next, she regretfully but relentlessly pointed out the ways in which he wasn’t prepared to lead. At one of the last debates, in Cleveland, Brian Williams began the program by showing back-to-back tapes of her saying “I am honored to be here” with Obama and “Shame on you, Barack Obama.” She neatly reconciled the differences in two sentences: “Well, this is a contested campaign. And as I have said many times, I have a great deal of respect for Senator

Obama, but we have differences.” But there was no way to talk around the jarring inconsistency of her two statements, especially the emotional contrast as it came through on the clips. In making different cases against Obama, she reinforced the strongest argument against herself: that she would say whatever she thought might work at the moment. Obama, with a few leaden exceptions in which he made a point of criticizing Clinton in a debate, seemed like the same character from one session to the next.

Hillary Clinton’s level of skill remained consistent; the ends toward which she used it varied. We have seen this pattern before, with Al Gore’s performances in his three debates against George W. Bush in 2000. In the first he was hyper-aggressive, with the instantly famous sighs that signaled his displeasure. In the second, after being mocked on *Saturday Night Live* for the first performance, he seemed almost sedated. By the third, he was Just Right, but the damage had been done. Bush was mediocre in all three, but consistent. By scoring logical points but confusing his identity, Gore hurt himself with the “jury.” So did Hillary Clinton.

Barack Obama’s evolution through the debates was just the opposite of Clinton’s. To an amazing degree, his message never changed; it matured. Knowing where Obama ended up by the late debates and primaries, it is easy to see what he was trying to say early on. In his often fuzzy answers in the early debates, sometimes so long in the buildup that he didn’t get to the main point before his time was cut off, Obama tried to do two things. He grappled with the question at hand—paying for his health-care proposals, dealing with Pakistan—while also

moving to the “real question” about the need for a “new kind” of politics. The pairing of those answers was second nature by the last debates but not in the early rounds. In these he wasted time on hedges and footnotes, and did not manage to make his slight pause before answering seem like a sign of reflection, as it came to later on.

Obama had noticeable spikes in his skill level. Ups: his most important line of the debates, which came in the last session before the Iowa caucuses. Carolyn Washburn, of *The Des Moines Register*, listed the former Clinton administration staffers advising him and asked how his foreign policy would be a “break from the past.” Hillary Clinton laughed in an unattractive way and said, in a comment not included in the transcript, “I want to hear that!” Obama’s answer is included: “Hillary, I’m looking forward to you advising me as well.” But the transcript doesn’t convey the gleam that immediately came into his eye as he conceived the reply, or the easy, just faintly aggressive smile with which he delivered it. This looked to me like the moment when he took command. There were more of

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these moments than most press coverage conveyed. One more illustration: in the YouTube debate, Anderson Cooper showed a video question asking Obama if he was “black enough.” He took a moment to grin, and said, “You know, when I’m catching a cab in Manhattan ...” and, after the resulting cheers and laughter died down, set into “Let me go to the broader issue,” which was that “race permeates our society.”

And his downs? Whenever he talked about certain topics, including China, it seemed to me that he was reading from cue cards (“manipulating their currency,” etc.) rather than expressing policies he had thought through. The policies he *has* made his own—on race, Iraq, constitutional issues, family values—are subtly or dramatically different from the Democratic orthodoxy. Like most people, where he is less certain, he is more orthodox, as he showed after clinching the nomination with an unsightly “pro-Israel” speech at the AIPAC convention in Washington.

Obama also showed a different sort of weakness in the debates, one that may be more significant during the general-election campaign and in his presidency if he wins. I noticed it more clearly after watching his three debates against Alan Keyes four years ago.

Keyes never had a chance in that election—he was a sacrificial fill-in for a Republican nominee who dropped out at

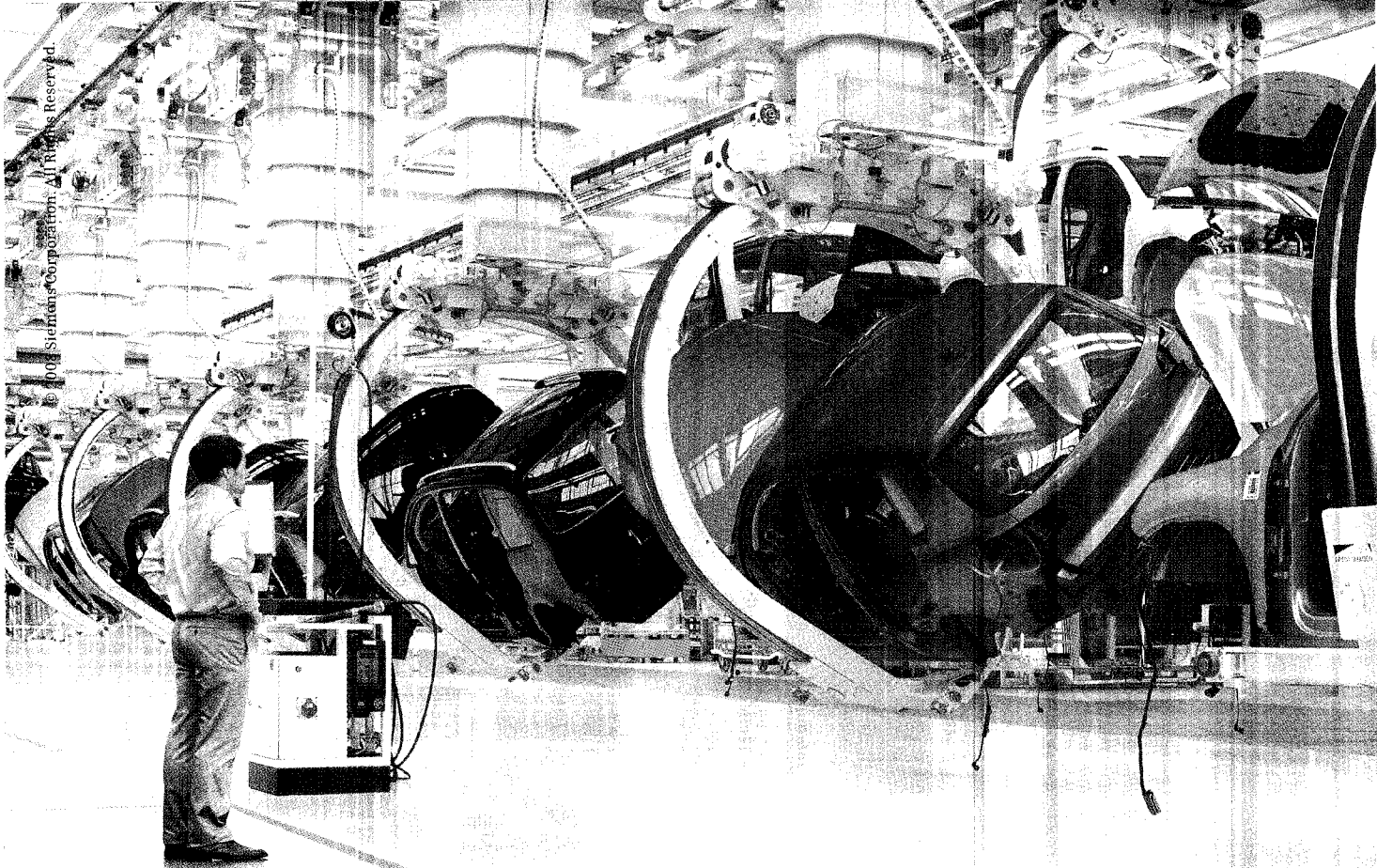
the last minute during a divorce scandal—but he can hold his own in any debate with anyone. He was a successful schoolboy orator and debater who has all the skills of repartee Obama seemed to lack during the primary debates: he answers immediately, he talks very fast, he has a theory and an illustration to buttress every point. If we applied the conventional wisdom of this year’s debates, we would assume that he would talk his way around the more deliberate and thoughtful Obama.

But in 2004, he didn’t. Obama matched him in speed, aggressiveness, and swagger. Anyone who looks at these old debates will see it. The Obama of the presidential debates seemed to be enduring the sessions; the Obama who took on Alan Keyes seemed to be having fun. When attacking Keyes’s background and ideas, which he did frequently, he sounded wry rather than ponderous or angry. He didn’t seem to mind needling or attacking Keyes, or seem upset when Keyes attacked.

The Obama of 2004 didn’t spend much time on his now-familiar “new age of politics” theme (or need to). If asked about steel-industry jobs, tax rates, or the death penalty, he would address the specifics of those issues, without bothering to stress the need for Americans to bridge their partisan divides. Every now and then, he would make those larger points—after all, this was six weeks after his famous speech at the Democratic convention about moving past red states and blue states, to the United States of America. But they seemed incidental rather than central.

That previous Obama also sounded very little like a professor. With dismissive ease, he reeled off rebuttal points and identified errors as if he had been working in a courtroom rather than a classroom all his life. Keyes had said that Jesus Christ would not have voted for Obama. Obama was asked for his response: “Well, you know, my first reaction was, I actually wanted to find out who Mr. Keyes’s pollster was, because if I had the opportunity to talk to Jesus Christ, I’d be asking something much more important than this Senate race. I’d want to know whether I was going up, or down.”

All in all, Obama seemed in his element and having fun—two things no one has detected about his debate performances this past year. The ease with instant retorts he had shown against Keyes seemed to desert him against Edwards and Clinton, along with his unflappability under personal attack. “Senator Clinton, she doesn’t mind the direct confrontations at all,” Sidney Blumenthal said of her. Senator Obama, he definitely seemed to mind. Especially when it came to personal confrontation. In the very last debate, Obama managed to keep a neutral, thoughtful expression on his face as Charles Gibson and George Stephanopoulos delivered one “electability” question after another. Peggy Noonan, a political columnist who wrote speeches for Ronald Reagan, has referred to this



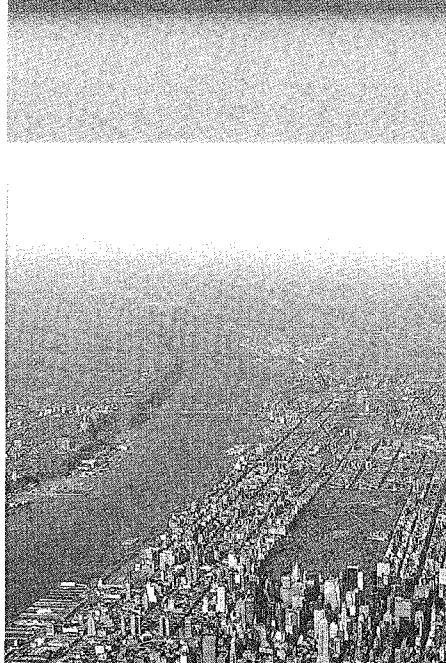
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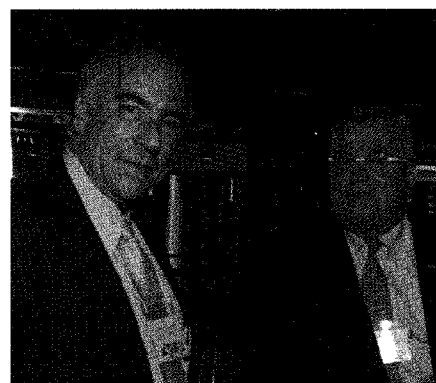
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Event Spotlight: "CEOs for Cities" Roundtable Dinner



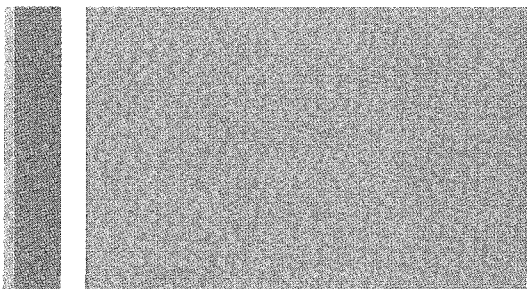
Siemens recently hosted a live conversation with urban leaders in partnership with "CEOs for Cities"—a network of mayors, corporate CEOs, university presidents, foundation officials, and business and civic leaders whose mission is to "take a fresh look at cities and make the most of their assets by building new leadership partnerships around urban innovations."



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Held on May 13, 2008, at ELEVEN restaurant in Pittsburgh, the dinner discussion focused on city transportation and mobility issues in the broader context of urban growth challenges.

Attendees included a cross section of experienced urban leaders from a variety of fields—representing business, the public sector, academia, and the media.



THIS PAGE (clockwise from top left): STEVE RAUCH, Vice President & General Manager, Siemens Intelligent Transportation Systems; PEGGY MCCORMICK, President, Atlanta Development Authority; PAUL O'CONNOR, Former Executive Director, World Business Chicago; JOHN T. BUCKLEY, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility, The Bank of New York Mellon; DAVID SAWYER, Vice President, Marketing Communications, Siemens Corporation, USA; RICHARD C. D. FLEMING, President & Chief Executive Officer, St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association; DAVID N. GINSBURG, President & Chief Executive Officer, Downtown Cincinnati, Inc.; HOWARD B. SLAUGHTER, Chief Executive Officer, Landmarks Community Capital Corporation; CHRISTOPHER W. HOENE, Director, Policy and Research, National League of Cities. OPPOSITE PAGE (clockwise from top right): LYNNE SCANGA, Executive Director, Ohio Valley General Hospital; BARBARA MARSHMAN, Editor, Editorial Pages, *San Jose Mercury News*; DAVID SAWYER, Vice President, Marketing Communications, Siemens Corporation, USA; HENRY S. WEBBER, Executive Vice Chancellor, Administration, Washington University in St. Louis; DAVID MAURRASSE, Ph.D., President, Chief Executive Officer, & Founder, Marga Incorporated; STEPHEN G. BLAND, Chief Executive Officer, Port Authority of Allegheny County.



Key Insights

The group explored a range of urban transportation issues, from suburban sprawl to government transportation initiatives to the impact of gasoline prices on mass-transit usage. The discussion yielded the following key insights:

- The U.S. has particular burdens when it comes to infrastructure and mass transit—old cities and mass transit systems, a driving lifestyle supported by decades of inexpensive gasoline, population density unmatched to mass transit routes, and insufficient land use policies
- Infrastructure development and transportation need to be elevated on the agendas of cities/regions, businesses, and individuals
- This is an auspicious time to raise these issues, with the confluence of rising energy prices and environmental concerns heightening awareness and prompting positive action
- These economic and societal factors might yield the lifestyle changes that will encourage investments in and reliance on public transportation
- Beyond transit issues, cities/regions need to focus on land use as the key to fostering sustainable communities; Europe has been much more successful than the U.S. in creating urban growth boundaries
- Such guidelines will not suppress development, per se, but will manage growth in a manner better suited to the environment
- The public needs to make the connection between urban guidelines, infrastructure investments, and other sustainability initiatives as the key to maintaining healthy and vibrant communities in the future



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as “Obama Thinking Face” and told me in an e-mail, “There is something delightful in the fact that you can see his thoughts developing as he speaks—that he’s thinking as he talks. It sounds small but most politicians seem distracted from their thoughts as they speak.” She added:

I remember always having the sense that Obama couldn’t land a punch. And then kind of respecting the fact that he wouldn’t land a punch. Hillary was flailing away like a midget boxer and he was holding her off with his long arm and then saying something boring about alternative energy sources.

Still, Obama’s most miserable scenes in any of the debates were cutaway shots when Hillary Clinton was criticizing his policies, his experience, or worst of all, his sincerity. When under personal attack herself, she usually wore a small, mocking grin or sometimes shook her head—*No, no, that’s wrong*. He tended to look not thoughtful but pained or stricken. Attack brought out the one great line about “looking forward to you advising me,” but many more moments of seeming to be thrown off his stride.

What had changed since 2004? Was it that Keyes, for all his virtuosity, was never a serious contender, so Obama had nothing to lose? Was it the move to the national stage? The greater range of issues outside his direct expertise? That he was now “the” black candidate in the race, with attendant dangers of seeming too aggressive or angry, which didn’t matter before, since Keyes is black too? The nature of national-level questioning, which holds so many more *gotcha* traps than the state debates did?

For now, we can’t be sure. But his recent show of discomfort with direct confrontation indicates a clear path for John McCain.

III. THIS FALL

John McCain is not a good debater, not even by comparison with George W. Bush. Having been in Washington for decades, he knows many issues in detail. Having been in Washington for decades, he often overexplains those details, as Bob Dole did against Bill Clinton in 1996. The exception is the whole field of economics, where through most of the Republican debates, he skated by with allusions to the advisers he would consult.

Worse, he will look and sound old and weak next to Obama. Ronald Reagan was about McCain’s current age when he ran for reelection against Walter Mondale, but Reagan looked 10 years younger than McCain does now. Obama is 10 years younger than Mondale was and looks younger still. McCain

must hope that he can apply a version of Reagan’s line about his opponent’s “youth and inexperience.” But lacking Reagan’s outward haleness, he risks coming across like Dole against Clinton—or, more ominously, his fellow ex-POW James Bond Stockdale, who turned in a notoriously lost- and incoherent-sounding performance against Al Gore and Dan Quayle (!) in the 1992 vice-presidential debates.

McCain also runs the risk of being the first Republican since Dole to go into the debates trailing in the national polls. This would allow Obama to do what George W. Bush did four years ago: nurse a lead and simply try to avoid mistakes. He’s had more practice with debates than McCain, and more recently.

In these circumstances, McCain’s tactics against Obama are obvious. He will ask for as many debates as he can, starting with informal town halls before either he or Obama is officially nominated. The informal setting shows him off to his best advantage, with the affable bantering that has long made him a favorite with the press. Whoever is behind wants more debates.

He will play the expectations game as hard as he can, knowing that’s how the press will keep score. Objectively, George W. Bush did poorly against both Gore and Kerry. But in each

The transcript doesn’t convey the gleam that immediately came into his eye when he conceived his reply—“Hillary, I’m looking forward to you advising me as well”—or the easy, just faintly aggressive smile. It looked to me like the moment when he took command.

case, he did “better than expected,” and so, if anything, was helped by the debates. In every talk with reporters, the Republican campaign team will marvel at Obama’s gifts in rhetoric. Of course he’ll do well in debates; that goes along with being “all talk.”

Once he gets on the stage, McCain will try to remind Obama of Hillary Clinton—that is, of someone he must take seriously, someone who is willing to challenge him and even insult him to his face. Obama “is vain about his idealism and ‘nobility,’” a staff member for one of Obama’s Democratic opponents (not Clinton) told me on the phone. “He is thin-skinned about having his motives and competence questioned, so that’s what you do.” Grizzled pols like Hillary Clinton or her husband would laugh off such an attempt; Obama may still be innocent enough to be shaken by it. McCain made many dismissive references to Obama after Obama became the presumptive nominee. The easy next step is to do so while looking at him.

For Obama the key is: look at John McCain, and see Alan Keyes.

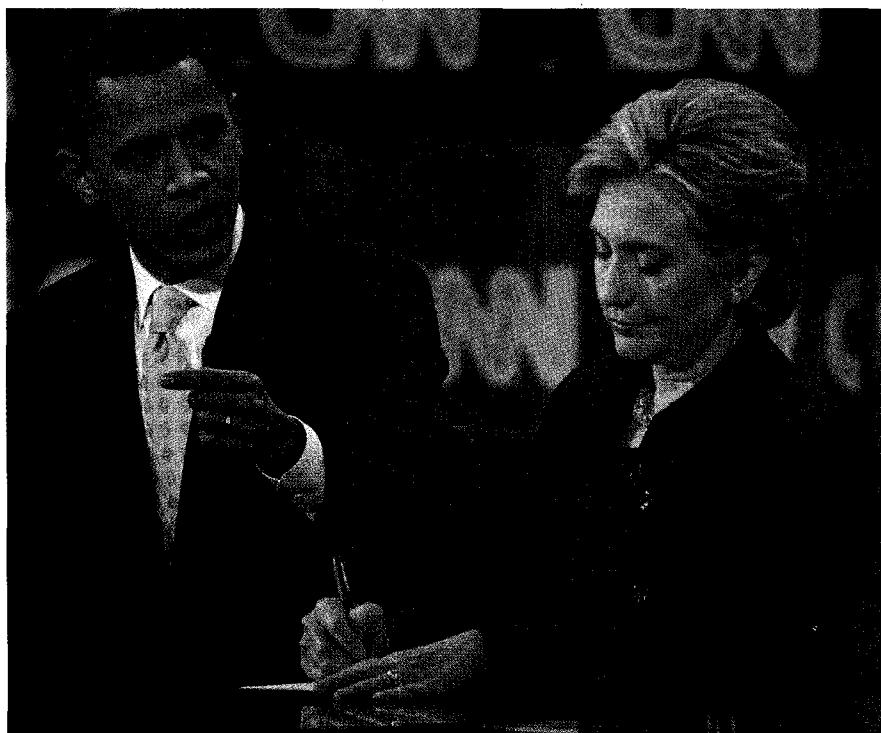
IV. THE RHETORICAL PRESIDENCY

Rhetoric is only part of a president's power, but it's an important part. Building public enthusiasm for your efforts helps overcome legislative and administrative barriers, as in their different ways Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton showed. Declaring a clear position makes a difference even within an administration. Appointees of the Reagan administration spent less time arguing about the president's goals and intentions than staffers in some other eras, because Reagan's speeches were so often designed to say just what the intentions were. I worked for two years as Jimmy Carter's speechwriter. Many issues had to be fought out at every level of the administration and finally resolved in speeches, in part because he was less comfortable

vibrancy of John Edwards's stump speeches does not translate as well to formal policy speeches. John McCain's strength is the one-on-one interview or informal town-hall meeting. His voice, bearing, and expressive range don't work as well at a lectern.

Obama has the buzz as this year's great orator—but in itself, that means less than it seems. Few will believe it now, but Jimmy Carter worked audiences like a master as his outsider campaign gathered steam in 1976. Even partially successful candidates—Teddy Kennedy, Mario Cuomo—can do so. My earliest firsthand political memory is of a rally for Barry Goldwater in Dodger Stadium in 1964; 50,000 people were there, and 100,000 eyes were on him the entire time. I even saw Richard Nixon hold a crowd entranced in 1968.

One reason to argue that Obama would be a more successful speaker than, say, Nixon is the way he has already used his eloquence as a political tool. Repeatedly during this campaign, he has gotten himself out of serious political or policy problems with the Big Formal Speech. The most celebrated instance was of course his speech about race relations, delivered at the Constitution Center in Philadelphia on March 18, during the controversy over the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, which seriously imperiled his candidacy. Garry Wills, whose studies of presidential rhetoric range from *Lincoln at Gettysburg* to *Nixon Agonistes*, compared it in *The New York Review of Books* to Lincoln's Cooper Union speech during his run for the presidency in 1860. Each candidate, Wills pointed out, was defending himself against a damaging charge—in Lincoln's case, that he sympathized with the violent abolitionist John Brown. Each answered the charge but



than Reagan in presenting a big, clear, simple summary of his goals.

What if Obama wins? We won't see him in debates again, or at least not until 2012. Answering questions at a presidential press conference is altogether different from handling them in a debate. The president controls every aspect: he talks as long as he wants; he can look daggers at any questioner who asks him to raise his hand or demands a yes/no answer, or can simply seem amused and incredulous. We'd see Obama on his chosen terrain, as a formal speaker. Everyone knows he is a "good" speaker. But what exactly would that mean for him as president?

In parallel with the debates this year, we have of course seen Obama the formal orator. His skill as a speaker has gotten unusual attention, in part because of the mediocrity of most rhetoric in this era. Hillary Clinton is a skillful debater but at best a workmanlike long-form speaker. The courtroom

did much more, since both speeches "forged a moral position that rose above the occasions for their speaking."

Obama's speeches have been additionally unusual in having a life beyond the moment in which they are given. It's a rarer achievement than it seems. Bill Clinton could predictably mesmerize those who actually watched and heard him speak. Anyone who merely read the transcript would wonder what all the excitement was about. Garry Wills quoted to me, via e-mail, Cicero's maxim "The effect is in the affect." Obama has mastered the performance part and more, because his major speeches are written to be read, rather than just watched and heard. They explain the way he thinks and the values with which he would approach problems as they presented themselves. Obama is the first major candidate since, oddly, Jimmy Carter who could plausibly have had a career as a writer. (Carter's pre-presidential memoir, *Why Not the Best?*, was more

obviously a campaign document than Obama's *Dreams From My Father*, written when he was in his 30s. But both make for compelling reading, and Carter's post-presidential books, except for his starchy formal memoir of the White House, have been very good.)

When politicians do try to lay out a new thought or policy, they tend to do so from the safety of incumbency, rather than as part of a campaign. For instance: when Carter ran for office, he talked about the importance of human rights around the world. But not until six months into his presidency, in a commencement speech at Notre Dame, did he explain in the fullest sense how the United States could balance an emphasis on human rights with awareness of its practical interests and obligations. It is a speech that survives re-reading 30 years later. (I am biased, having been involved, but Jerome Doolittle was the main writer.) Nothing from his campaign does so. I expect some of the addresses Obama has already given will, whether he is elected or not.

As Hillary Clinton noted at the sourest points of the primary battles, and as John McCain will hammer home at every chance until Election Day, "mere words" are not the same as leadership or effectiveness. The right words can obviously make a huge difference. Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan all magnified their power, especially at the start of their administrations, through their ability to explain what they were trying to do. "The only thing we have to fear ...," "Ask not ...," "Tear down this wall"—such phrases changed people's minds and shaped events.

Rhetoric can distort expectations and create traps, as many critics of British Prime Minister Tony Blair were noting by the end of his tenure. In his book *The Kennedy Promise*, the British journalist Henry Fairlie made a similar point about John Kennedy. The grandiosity of promises to "pay any price" and "bear any burden," Fairlie contended, fed a mood of "national peril" and set the conditions for engagement in Vietnam. Woodrow Wilson, as he watched the League of Nations falter, and George W. Bush, who began his second term with a sweeping Wilsonian promise of "the expansion of freedom in all the world," also suffered from the mismatch between elevated rhetoric and heartbreaking reality. The greatest speech of Bush's career—his address to a Joint Session of Congress days after the 9/11 attacks—is now a source of heartbreak on its own, since the potential for rousing America to address its domestic and international vulnerabilities degenerated into the all-consuming effort to attack Iraq.

The question about Obama is: If he is elected, where might such uplifting words lead? Of course we won't know unless we see. But the rhetorical strategies of two of his predecessors provide a clue. Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan both came into office with zillion-point action plans for the steps they would take, plans they had announced during their campaigns. Reagan's came largely from the Heritage Foundation; Clinton's, from decades of what his associates called "The Conversation" about public problems and their likely solutions. George W.

Bush arrived with some items in mind—and after 9/11 adopted a long-standing action plan for dealing with Saddam Hussein and reasserting presidential power.

Based on his rhetoric, Barack Obama would arrive not because of support for his list of programs, although he has offered them, but because of support for his cast of mind. His speeches and debate answers show us how he thinks, much more than they reveal exactly the policies he would advance for, say, improving the economy, dealing with the Chinese (where his proposals have often seemed surprisingly crude and ill-informed), or coping with crime or climate change. Every administration turns on the president's cast of mind: Bill Clinton's startling gifts of intelligence and even more startling lack of self-discipline; George W. Bush's toxic combination of decisiveness and lack of curiosity; Ronald Reagan's sunniness and lack of interest in detail. But for some presidents, cast of mind is a central feature—the person, much more than the plan, represents the promise of the presidency. Obama is one of these.

I am very sensitive to the perils of this approach because the man I worked for, Jimmy Carter, was elected in large part as a national savior—a good, religious, "never lie to you" president to fill the moral void created by Richard Nixon, Watergate, and Vietnam. Charles Peters, of *The Washington Monthly*, once compared Carter to the figurehead leader of Vichy France, Marshal Pétain. Each man, in this view, offered to save the nation through his own personal qualities. In Carter's case, those turned out to be no match for the disasters of the late '70s. For instance: in the spring of 1980, as Carter ran for reelection, the prime interest rate was 20 percent.

The argument that Obama would be another Pétain-like Carter, offering his noble qualities only to be overwhelmed by ignoble reality, is the deepest fear about him, or at least the one that most resonates with me. The greatest hope is that before his brief time in the U.S. Senate, he absorbed more practical skills and sensibilities than Carter did in Georgia. Michael Janeway, who as dean of the Medill Journalism School at Northwestern knew the Chicago establishment figures who nurtured Obama's rise in the 1990s, speaks of "the Chicago way"—"getting all the parties together and taking responsibility for finding a solution." Under the Chicago way, the fact that Obama's most important speeches are short on eight-point action plans is a strength rather than a weakness: it's a sign that serious business will be done.

Peggy Noonan compared this approach to that of the Kennedy administration. "JFK and his people came into the White House," she said in an e-mail, "with a faith they could be practical, pragmatic, worldly, that with these attributes they could manage what came over history's transom. I see Obama as like this: things will come over the transom and he'll approach them as a thoughtful sophisticate. He'll think."

For better and worse, if Obama wins, a thinking president is what we'll have. ▀

James Fallows is an *Atlantic* national correspondent; his blog is at jamesfallows.theatlantic.com.



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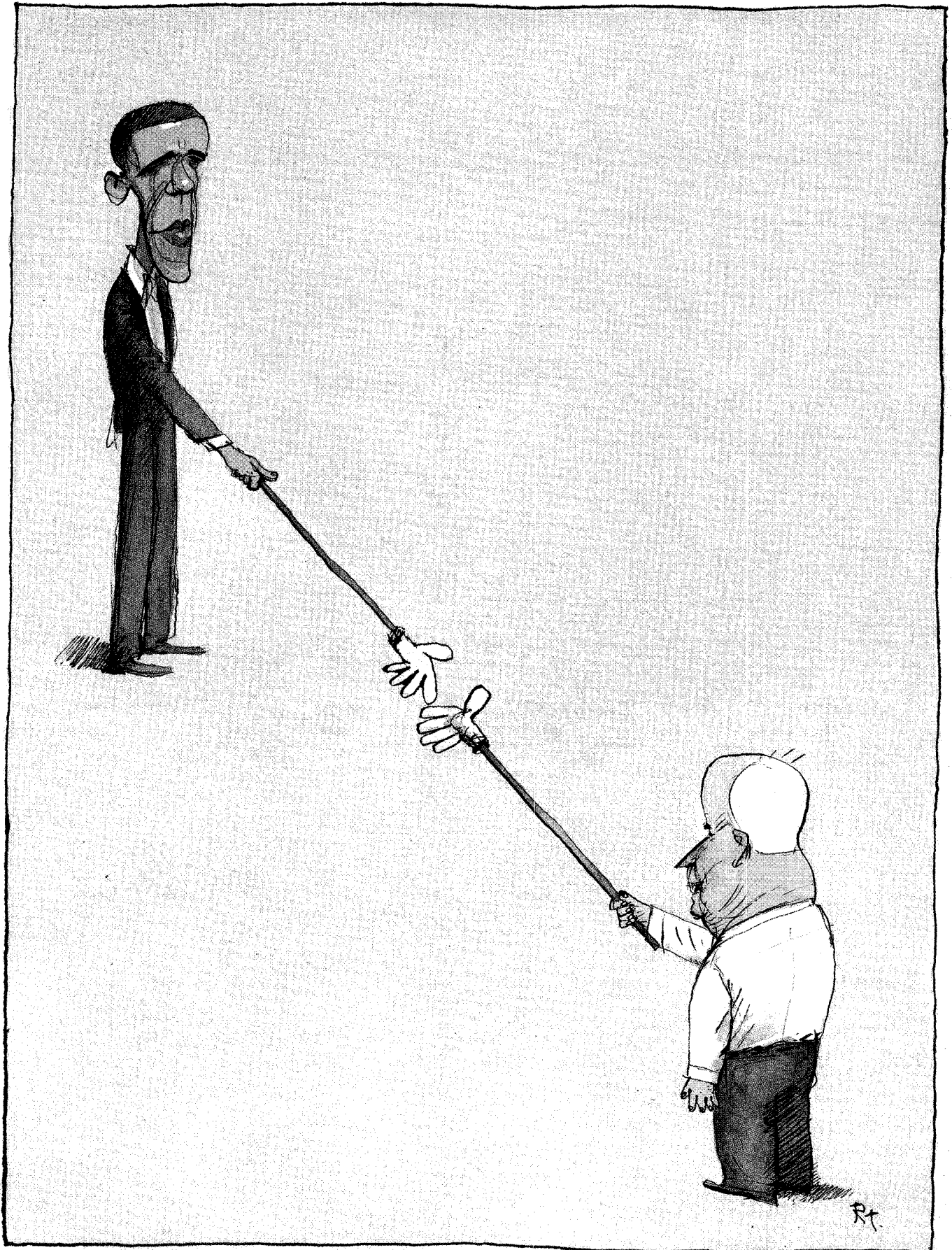
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Obama and McCain both say they want
to usher in a new, less divisive brand of politics.
Which of them has the better chance? Is bipartisanship still possible?

BY RONALD BROWNSTEIN

Illustration by Richard Thompson

Reconcilable Differences

American voters nearly always elect a president who responds to the flaws they have found in his predecessor. Jimmy Carter was more honest than Richard Nixon; Ronald Reagan tougher than Carter; George H. W. Bush “kinder and gentler” than Reagan; Bill Clinton more in touch than Bush; George W. Bush more morally upright in his personal life than Clinton. In November, whether most voters pull the lever for John McCain or for Barack Obama, they’re likely to get a president who’s more competent than Bush. What’s less certain—but equally important—is whether they’ll get one who can be the uniter that Bush promised to be, rather than the divider he has been.

The public’s exasperation with the escalating partisan conflict and diminishing achievement in Washington roars through this year’s polls; discontent with the performance of both the president and Congress is at a record level. Both Obama and McCain have responded by centering their respective campaigns on a promise to reach across party lines and narrow the country’s partisan and ideological divisions. Each says he intends to be the president of all of America, not half of it. And each says he is committed to treating his opponent and

his opponent’s party with respect. Through the long primary season, I often heard from voters convinced that an Obama-McCain race would avoid the sniping that drives most modern campaigns and set a respectful tone that could help the winner govern after November. “An Obama-McCain debate would be healthy for the world,” Patsy Petit, a McCain supporter, insisted to me just before the New Hampshire primary last January.

In many ways, the first stages of the Obama-McCain race have offered little to justify this optimism. Every day produces a drumbeat of attacks from each side against the other. As a political commentator, I get 20 or 30 e-mails a day from the two campaigns and their surrogates—all hoping to find their way into my coverage of the race. *Respect* and *reconciliation* are not the words they conjure.

On the morning after Obama clinched the Democratic nomination in June, for example, the Republican National Committee had by 9:10 a.m. distributed three e-mails criticizing him, including two with the subject lines “Obama’s Weak Finish” and “Obama’s Pander Pivot.” The McCain campaign had piled on with a release denouncing Obama’s views on Iran. By 10 a.m., the Democratic National Committee had

issued two releases jabbing McCain over his ties to President Bush, and the McCain campaign had announced a conference call (with, among others, independent Senator Joe Lieberman, the Democratic vice-presidential nominee in 2000) to press the attack on Obama's posture toward Iran. By 11:17 a.m., the Obama campaign had fired back with a release attacking Lieberman over his votes on Iran. And so it went throughout the day; the e-mails pinged back and forth like volleys in a tennis match. By the time of the day's last release (from the RNC at 10:58 p.m.), the RNC and the McCain campaign had sent about two dozen more salvos criticizing Obama (nine linking Obama to fund-raiser Tony Rezko, who'd just been convicted on corruption charges); and the Obama campaign, the DNC, and groups affiliated with the Democrats had posted about a dozen more releases criticizing McCain (including a flurry accusing him of "outright deception," "misstatements and distortions," and a "willingness to mislead the American people"). "This ain't going to be no civil campaign," says Senator Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican and one of McCain's closest Senate allies. "I mean, come on—a lot's at stake."

The tension between each candidate's desire to hold the high ground and the extraordinary pressure to go negative—especially as Election Day looms—will be one of the central dynamics in this fall's campaign. Over the past decade, unconstrained partisanship has debilitated Washington and prevented the federal government from addressing the country's most pressing problems. This election offers a real possibility—the first in many years—for a de-escalation of the partisan arms race. But this possibility will recede if the presidential campaign turns as toxic as the last two.

From the final years of Bill Clinton's presidency through Bush's two bruising terms, American politics has been polarized as sharply as at any point in the past century. Party-line voting in Congress hasn't been so prevalent since the days of William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. In the history of modern polling, Republican and Democratic voters have never held such disparate views of a president's job performance as they do of Bush's.

"Hyper-partisanship" is how the Republican strategist Ken Mehlman aptly describes the current political environment. Its price is a paralyzing inability to confront the most difficult problems facing the nation: health care, global warming, energy independence, immigration, entitlement reform, and the path forward in Iraq. On these controversial issues, meaningful progress is virtually impossible without bipartisan support. Indeed, the three most ambitious domestic-policy initiatives of the past 15 years—Clinton's attempt to provide universal health care, in 1993; Newt Gingrich's effort to remake the federal budget, in 1995; and Bush's drive to redesign Social Security around private investment accounts, in 2005—all failed for the same reason: in each case, the authors were unable to attract any meaningful support for their ideas outside their own coalition, in the country or in Congress.

Party-line legislation fails when the stakes are highest, because neither party is comfortable making big, difficult changes without at least some political-risk-sharing from the other side. And of course some bipartisan support is usually necessary to garner the 60 Senate votes required to break a filibuster. What's more, legislation that *is* passed on a party-line basis typically contains a structural flaw—it cannot incorporate ideas that divide the majority party's coalition, which means that many policy tools are left out because they are ideologically impure. As a result, we are asked, for example, to choose between energy legislation that either focuses almost solely on new drilling or tilts overwhelmingly toward conservation and subsidizing renewable energy. This is like trying to cut a piece of paper with one scissor blade. Politically and substantively, progress is typically unlikely without both.

Deep structural changes in American politics have brought us to this impasse. They include revisions in congressional rules that have made it easier for the party leadership to impose discipline on their members; the proliferation of interest groups of left and right; the resurgence of overtly partisan forms of media; and a generation-long ideological "sorting-out" of voters (driven largely by the increased prominence of cultural and foreign-policy issues) that has made each party's electoral coalition much more homogeneous.

But especially in recent years, hyper-partisanship has also been driven and reinforced by the modern presidential campaign. Presidential elections are meant to be tough; they exist to sharpen and clarify differences. But the ever-extending duration of the campaign and the 24/7 intensity of the media coverage that surrounds it systematically encourage distortion and denigration. In theory, the longer campaign and intensified coverage might provide the candidates and the press with a greater chance to carefully explain the differences between the contenders. In practice, the need to break through the constant chatter and drive the daily media narrative—the imperative to win each news cycle—encourages the campaigns to portray policy disagreements as character flaws and to reduce the candidates' differences to garish stereotypes (Plutocrat! Socialist! Warmonger! Appeaser!). Every campaign press secretary knows that a candidate can attract more media attention with a 30-second attack on his rival than with a 30-minute explanation of his own policies.

Months of this sniping tend to harden the country's divisions and diminish the eventual winner's ability to govern. Any goodwill that either nominee evokes among the supporters of the other at the start of the campaign is now reliably extinguished by the end. That dynamic was especially pronounced in 2000 and 2004, when the country was divided almost exactly in half between Bush and his Democratic opponents, Al Gore and John Kerry. The brutal tone and tenor of each of those campaigns—the Swift Boat accusations on one side, or



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the charges that Bush had knowingly lied to push America into war with Iraq on the other—left many (possibly most) Gore and Kerry supporters utterly disdainful of Bush, and vice versa. After each election, Bush took the oath of office with nearly half the country alienated from him. Bush compounded his problems with a uniquely polarizing style of governing, but Gore or Kerry, had either man won, undoubtedly would have entered office on an equally narrow ledge—facing as much suspicion and resistance from red America as Bush did from the voters in the Democratic coalition.

This year's campaign has followed many of the peevish conventions of its recent predecessors. Seemingly anything said by anyone connected to either side can spark a firestorm that rages across the Internet and the broadcast airwaves for a few hours, only to be succeeded by another eruption 24 hours later. Bloggers of left and right, belligerent talk-radio hosts, and wall-to-wall TV pundits (present company included) have amplified the daily campaign quarrels into an unrelenting background buzz of apparently unstinting conflict. The interest groups and commentators associated with each party have worked tirelessly to inflame their audiences against the other candidate. So, for instance, Arianna Huffington, the born-again liberal commentator, found a particularly contemptuous metaphor for the common liberal argument that McCain had sold his soul to conservatives. "Sure, she's a whore," Huffington wrote

of McCain, "but she wears an abstinence promise ring and feels totally guilty when she stuffs the money in her bra, so she's not like all the other whores." Meanwhile, Rush Limbaugh, the popular talk-radio host, was describing Obama as "a socialist," "a fraud," and an emasculated weakling. "He can't take a punch, he's weak, and he whines," Limbaugh declared this spring. "I'm sure some women find that attractive because they would look at him as a little boy and would want to protect him ... But it embarrasses me as a man."

The candidates themselves have consistently jabbed at each other too, though with a notable difference in tone. Especially early in the campaign, Obama was more persistent in criticizing McCain than vice versa. But Obama's language about his opponent generally has been restrained. He often calls McCain a "genuine American hero," and his attacks—most often linking McCain with Bush—are seldom personal.

That's emphatically not the case when McCain talks about Obama. McCain seems incapable of masking feelings about his younger opponent that border on disdain. He often says that Obama, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has "no experience on national-security issues." In the spring, while pressing Obama to visit Iraq with him, McCain said he would use such a trip to "educate" his rival. In late May, when Obama voted for a bipartisan Senate proposal to increase benefits for veterans and insinuated that McCain had engaged in "partisan posturing" by opposing the bill as too expensive, McCain responded with a blistering two-page statement that said Obama possessed "less than zero understanding" of the issue. The statement accused Obama of "exploiting a thoughtful difference of opinion to advance his own ambitions"—"as he always does." McCain then insisted that he would not accept criticism on an issue relating to veterans "from Senator Obama, who did not feel it was his responsibility to serve our country in uniform." It was like responding to a spitball with a cruise missile.

McCain allies such as Rick Davis, the campaign manager, insist that the senator respects Obama and that his sharp tone merely reflects his competitive nature. But John Weaver, who served as chief political strategist in McCain's 2000 campaign and again early in the 2008 campaign before being forced out in a power struggle with Davis, says McCain "does lack respect" for Obama, largely from the conviction that "he's not ready, he's green." Weaver, like other observers, thought McCain's attitudes about Obama stood in contrast with his personal respect for Hillary Clinton. "All campaigns reflect the personality of the candidate," Weaver said. "The problem [our campaign] had in 2000 is, we made emotional decisions. Got wrapped up in the bubble. That's a reflection of John. He at times makes emotional decisions, and when he does, they are almost always a mistake. That's what you see right now. You've got to resist this decision-making in a bubble, being angry at Obama, or personalizing it ... That's a danger."

CATHEDRAL

Over time it occurs to me
I am building a shed that will burn.
Footer and sill, whatever I do
flames blue and translates to ash.
The nail shrieks as it enters the joist
and streams out, shrieks
and drips a metal tear
from the elemental eye.

What I do not know is here.
I worship wood and the instant.
What is over, I can never finish.
The angel of work is sweat.
And still as I move the brush
many faces look back at me.
The stain vanishing into the knot
reminds me of something I forgot.

—RODNEY JONES

Rodney Jones's most recent collection of poems is *Salvation Blues*, which received the 2007 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award.

Weaver believes that McCain can win the election only by running an elevated campaign, though he acknowledges, "I am a minority in my party and peer group." And if McCain "does win in a campaign in which they've had to basically destroy Obama in order for him to eke out a narrow victory and then he goes and faces a Congress that is going to be back in pre-Reagan numbers for the Democrats, it is going to be impossible to govern. I know it's in John to run [an elevated] campaign," Weaver says, "because I know he's running to govern, but is he going to be able to do that? Or are the darker forces going to prevail?"

Predictably, the daily fusillade from each side has divided and hardened public opinion about McCain and Obama. When the election year began, each man generated unusually positive reactions outside his own party, according to surveys by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center. But by spring, both men had seen their favorability ratings decline substantially among independents and voters in the opposite party.

That trend would seem to doom this election to the same trajectory as the previous two, with the eventual winner facing crippling hostility from almost half the country when he

each has quickly and consistently rebuked supporters who criticize the opponent in excessively personal terms (such as the liberal talk-show host who called McCain a "warmonger" and the conservative who stressed Obama's middle name of "Hussein" when introducing McCain at a rally).

Because both men are balancing their daily criticisms of the other with these inclusive signals, each may succeed more than Bush did at keeping a foot in the door to those who ultimately prefer the other candidate. That would allow either to emerge from this election with the opportunity to build broader coalitions than Bush has done or than Bill Clinton managed to do after 1997. The next question is whether either man would seize that opportunity.

To reach agreements that attract support beyond their own party, politicians usually must make concessions that antagonize interests within it. In the Senate, McCain has often passed that test, partnering with Democrats on several intensely controversial issues, including the "patient's bill of rights," campaign-finance reform, preserving the filibuster for judicial appointments, comprehensive immigration reform

**'This ain't going to be no civil campaign,'
says Senator Lindsey Graham, one of McCain's closest
Senate allies. 'I mean, come on—a lot's at stake.'**

assumes office. But that may not be inevitable. For all the conflict they have endured and provoked, Obama and McCain are striking enough offsetting notes to make it difficult for each to demonize the other. Each frequently makes a point of reminding audiences about the shared values that connect Americans; McCain even delivered an entire speech this spring arguing that the relationship between two of his home state's legendary legislators, the late Mo Udall and the late Barry Goldwater—the former a liberal Democrat, the latter a conservative Republican—should reassure Americans that we "have so much more that unites us than divides us." McCain and Obama have each pledged, if elected, to consider officials from the other party when naming the Cabinet. "I am certain that there will be bipartisan representation in his Cabinet," David Axelrod, Obama's chief strategist, says flatly.

Each candidate also has already appeared before audiences that his party often shuns (for example, Obama spoke at an AIDS conference organized by evangelical megachurch leader Rick Warren in 2006, and McCain visited Selma, Alabama, and the decaying blue-collar Democratic stronghold of Youngstown, Ohio, this spring). Each is promising to run more of a national campaign than his predecessors did, and each is contesting states his party has often conceded. And

that included a pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants, and global warming. In each of those fights, he accepted severe criticism from conservatives in and out of Congress as the price of building legislative alliances with Democrats. "McCain has demonstrated the fact that he'll charge ahead and he'll stay with it, even if he is taking lots of incoming," says Frank Sharry, the former director of the National Immigration Forum, a generally liberal group that supported the reform legislation. "He takes risks to produce breakthroughs on big issues."

As president, would McCain take as many risks as he did in the Senate to assemble inclusive coalitions? Many Democrats, noting McCain's concessions to conservatives in this campaign, believe the answer is no. His high-profile bipartisan partnerships (which multiplied after he returned to the Senate, disillusioned and angry, in the wake of his 2000 presidential-primary defeat by Bush) always coexisted with an overall record that placed him in concert with conservatives, and in collision with Democrats, on most issues. On his way to the GOP nomination, McCain moved demonstrably to the right; his 2008 campaign agenda includes conservative priorities certain to provoke intense Democratic opposition, such as extending Bush's tax cuts and overriding state regulation of health insurance. And McCain has taken an uncompromising

position on Iraq, insisting that he will maintain American troops there until the country achieves stability.

Tom Daschle, the Democrats' former Senate leader from South Dakota and a senior Obama adviser, knows McCain well enough to have engaged in talks with him in 2001 meant to encourage McCain to leave the GOP and join the Democratic caucus as an independent. Daschle says the complexity of McCain's record and the volatility of his personality make it difficult to predict whether McCain would govern as a uniter or a divider. "There are sort of two John McCains," Daschle said. "There is the conciliatory deal maker and pragmatist that he can be. There is the hard-core, hard-line ideologue that he can be as well. If the latter becomes the dominant McCain [in the White House], I think that much of what we've experienced in these last eight years will be repeated. If he decides to use the most pragmatic approach, then I think there are tremendous opportunities to work together."

The likelihood that Democrats will control both chambers of Congress in 2009—and almost certainly by increased margins—would shape McCain's choices. It would mean he could get legislation passed only by reaching agreement with

would increase demands for Obama to pass his program by maximizing unity among Democrats and minimizing outreach to Republicans. The bigger the victory, the stronger the pressure to marginalize GOP legislators and push uncompromising policies.

In such an environment, would Obama still fulfill his campaign promises "to bring together Republicans and Democrats" to solve problems? Some allies are confident: Senator Ben Nelson of Nebraska, a conservative Democrat who endorsed Obama early this year, says that Obama's commitment to dialogue with rogue nations abroad reveals something about the approach he would take at home. "You see in Obama somebody who is willing to take heat and criticism for wanting to talk to our enemies," Nelson said. "If he has that approach, you know very well that he is willing to talk to the other side" in Congress. Sharry, the former head of the National Immigration Forum, believes the senator from Illinois would bring to the presidency the same unusual combination of qualities that Ronald Reagan did: the ability to mobilize the public for change and the willingness to cut deals with both parties in Congress to achieve it.

John Weaver, once McCain's chief political strategist,
says McCain 'does lack respect' for Obama, largely from
the conviction that 'he's not ready, he's green.'

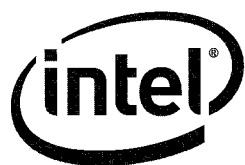
the Democrats in the congressional majority, the same equation that faced Richard Nixon, George H. W. Bush, and for the final six years of his presidency, Ronald Reagan. That would encourage conciliation and deal-making, especially on issues such as climate change, immigration, and conceivably health care, where McCain has shown some willingness to break with his party's orthodoxy. Of course, it might also provoke McCain's more combative side on spending, taxes, and above all, the Iraq War.

McCain is a politician of stormy personal passions, and a McCain presidency would likely offer a roller coaster of cooperation and conflict. He probably would replace the permanent warfare between Bush and the Democratic Congress with hairpin turns in mood from day to day, if not hour to hour. He could treat a Democratic Congress as a legislative partner or an electoral foil—or, most likely, as some of both.

Obama as president would face a very different situation. An Obama victory almost certainly would enlarge the Democratic House and Senate majorities and diminish the already attenuated ranks of Republican moderates who might be open to working with him. In that scenario, both the gain of Democrats and the loss of centrist Republicans

But in Washington, Obama has been much more cautious than his rhetoric suggests about working with Republicans or challenging Democrats to reach bipartisan agreements. Since arriving in the Senate, in 2005, he has voted with a majority of Senate Democrats almost 97 percent of the time, according to Congressional Quarterly. (McCain has voted with a majority of Republicans 85 percent of the time since entering the Senate, in 1987.) And although Obama has sometimes worked with Republican senators to pass legislation, he's done so primarily on relatively noncontroversial issues, such as a bill to post government contracts online.

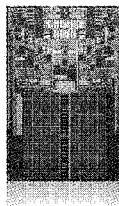
Even in his presidential-campaign proposals, Obama has stepped carefully. He has ruffled some feathers by emphasizing personal responsibility in the African American community, and in July he infuriated the liberal "netroots" by voting for a congressional deal that provided legal immunity to telecommunications companies that had cooperated with Bush's program of warrantless wiretapping after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. But little of his agenda departs from conventional Democratic preferences. Initially he declared that to stabilize Social Security, "everything should be on the table," including benefit cuts, but he'd renounced that position by last September. He has similarly diluted his earlier support for merit pay



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for teachers. He pointedly refused to join Hillary Clinton and John Edwards in crossing organized labor to propose requiring individuals to buy health insurance—though such a requirement is probably the key to a deal with the health-insurance industry for universal coverage. Lindsey Graham, like other Republicans, sees all this as evidence that Obama is unwilling to take the heat from allies that's required to reach consensus with opponents on difficult questions. "Nothing changes up here unless you make somebody [on your side] mad," says Graham, who has done just that on an array of issues. "I can't think of a time when he's made anybody mad."

Still, if Obama wins, he will also face significant incentives to try to work cooperatively with Republicans and the interests they represent. If Democrats gain more House and Senate seats in November, many are likely to come from Republican-leaning territory. The approaches Obama would need to take to keep conservative Democrats loyal on energy, health care, or spending might not differ much from those he'd take to attract the first few moderate Republicans.

David Axelrod, Obama's chief strategist, agrees that big Democratic gains would pose "a challenge to the goal of bipartisanship," but he predicts that a President Obama would resist pressure for a purely partisan governing strategy. "If there's

conservative faith had triggered his defeat, pursued a militantly obstructionist strategy against Clinton on many issues. But Clinton compounded his problem with an initial agenda that oscillated between ideas that advanced his promise of a fresh "third way" and others that stamped him as the champion of a more partisan and conventionally liberal approach (such as his numbingly complex and overly bureaucratic health-care plan). Democratic congressional leaders, confident that their large majorities would enable them to pass Clinton's program on a partisan basis, added to his difficulties by persuading him to delay or downplay centrist initiatives, including campaign-finance and welfare reform, that divided their members. That diminished Clinton's credibility as a reformer, another central element of his 1992 message. The bill for these miscalculations came due in the 1994 election, when Clinton's turns toward the left inspired a huge conservative turnout, and the image of ineffectiveness and conflict in the capital alienated the center. The result was a Republican landslide that swept the GOP to control of both the House and the Senate for the first time in four decades.

A president who chooses compromise will inevitably confront obstruction from many people in the other party and discontent from the most-ideological elements in his own. Those

In Washington, Obama has been much more cautious about working with Republicans than his rhetoric suggests.

an enhanced Democratic majority, I think that he's going ... to urge a special sense of responsibility to try and forge coalitions around these answers, not because we won't be able to force our will in many cases, but because, ultimately, effective governance requires it in the long term," Axelrod said. "I think he would be a mediating force against those who suggest that we should simply overrun the other side on issue after issue."

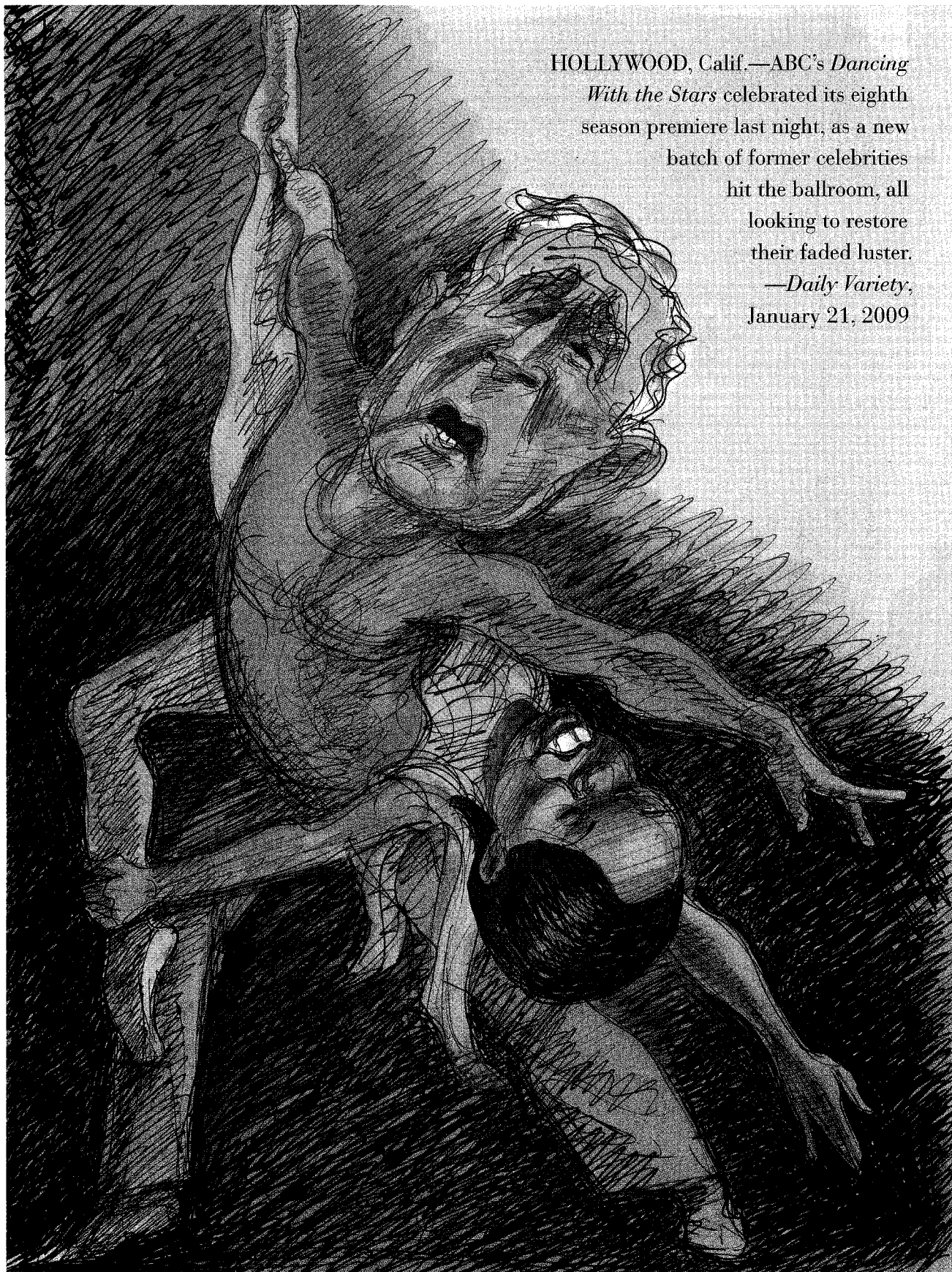
Axelrod isn't speaking from altruism. He recognizes that a President Obama might quickly alienate many voters if Washington were to remain a war zone in 2009. So does Daschle: "Barack has put so much into this notion that we ought to be reducing the polarization, reducing the confrontation—for him not to make it a central part of his administration would be a big mistake." Obama would need to look back only as far as Bill Clinton's first two years to see the risks in reverting to a more partisan strategy. Clinton ran in 1992, much as Obama and McCain are running this year, on a pledge to transcend "brain-dead politics in both parties." Instead, Clinton's first two years were convulsed by ferocious conflict between the parties. That was partly because congressional Republicans, convinced that George H. W. Bush's deviations from the

are formidable obstacles to a more inclusive and productive politics. But Bush's failure has highlighted the fact that, ultimately, presidents who divide rarely conquer, and it has created an enormous opportunity for his successor to reshape the contours of American politics. Today the American political system is more polarized than the American people; a president who can deliver pragmatic legislation on big issues might cement the allegiance of the millions of voters who are disenchanted with Washington's failures and not tightly bound to either party. The opportunity to build a lasting majority would be greater for Obama than for McCain, because of the damage Bush has done to the GOP's image. But either man could strengthen his party by redefining it as more flexible, inclusive, and practical than it is seen to be today. More important, he could remind Americans, as Theodore Roosevelt once put it, that their "common interests are as broad as the continent." And that could be the key to progress on all of the problems—from health care and energy to the economy and national security—that will await the next president in January 2009. ▀

Ronald Brownstein is the political director for Atlantic Media Company and the author of *The Second Civil War: How Extreme Partisanship Has Paralyzed Washington and Polarized America*, out this month in paperback.

UNCONFIRMED REPORT by Edward Sorel

HOLLYWOOD, Calif.—ABC's *Dancing With the Stars* celebrated its eighth season premiere last night, as a new batch of former celebrities hit the ballroom, all looking to restore their faded luster.
—*Daily Variety*,
January 21, 2009



Hillary Clinton's campaign was undone by a clash of personalities more toxic than anyone imagined. E-mails and memos—published here for the first time—reveal the backstabbing and conflicting strategies that produced an epic meltdown.

BY JOSHUA GREEN

The Front-Runner's Fall

For all that has been written and said about Hillary Clinton's epic collapse in the Democratic primaries, one issue still nags. Everybody knows *what* happened. But we still don't have a clear picture of *how* it happened, or why.

The after-battle assessments in the major newspapers and newsweeklies generally agreed on the big picture: the campaign was not prepared for a lengthy fight; it had an insufficient delegate operation; it squandered vast sums of money; and the candidate herself evinced a paralyzing schizophrenia—one day a shots-'n'-beers brawler, the next a Hallmark Channel mom. Through it all, her staff feuded and bickered, while her husband distracted. But as a journalistic exercise, the "campaign obit" is inherently flawed, reflecting the viewpoints of those closest to the press rather than empirical truth.

How did things look on the inside, as they unraveled?

To find out, I approached a number of current and former Clinton staffers and outside consultants and asked them to share memos, e-mails, meeting minutes, diaries—anything that would offer a contemporaneous account. The result demonstrates that paranoid dysfunction breeds the impulse to hoard. Everything from major strategic plans to bitchy staff

e-mail feuds was handed over. (See for yourself: much of it is posted online at www.theatlantic.com/clinton.)

Two things struck me right away. The first was that, outward appearances notwithstanding, the campaign prepared a clear strategy and did considerable planning. It sweated the large themes (Clinton's late-in-the-game emergence as a blue-collar champion had been the idea all along) and the small details (campaign staffers in Portland, Oregon, kept tabs on Monica Lewinsky, who lived there, to avoid any surprise encounters). The second was the thought: *Wow, it was even worse than I'd imagined!* The anger and toxic obsessions overwhelmed even the most reserved Beltway wise men. Surprisingly, Clinton herself, when pressed, was her own shrewdest strategist, a role that had never been her strong suit in the White House. But her advisers couldn't execute strategy; they routinely attacked and undermined each other, and Clinton never forced a resolution. Major decisions would be put off for weeks until suddenly she would erupt, driving her staff to panic and misfire.

Above all, this irony emerges: Clinton ran on the basis of managerial competence—on her capacity, as she liked to put it, to "do the job from Day One." In fact, she never behaved like

a chief executive, and her own staff proved to be her Achilles' heel. What is clear from the internal documents is that Clinton's loss derived not from any specific decision she made but rather from the preponderance of the many she did not make. Her hesitancy and habit of avoiding hard choices exacted a price that eventually sank her chances at the presidency. What follows is the inside account of how the campaign for the seemingly unstoppable Democratic nominee came into being, and then came apart.

2003–2006: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

As long ago as 2003, the Clintons' pollster, Mark Penn, was quietly measuring Hillary's presidential appeal, with an eye toward the 2004 election. Polling suggested that her prospects were "reasonably favorable," but Clinton herself never seriously considered running. Instead, over the next three years, a handful of her advisers met periodically to prepare for 2008. They believed the biggest threat was John Edwards.

Decisions made before her 2006 reelection to the Senate were to have important consequences downstream. Perhaps the biggest was Clinton's choosing to forgo the tradition of visiting early states like Iowa and New Hampshire. Even if she was presumed to be the heavy favorite, Clinton needed to win Iowa to maintain the impression of invincibility that she believed was her greatest advantage. And yet Iowa was a vulnerability. Both husband and wife lacked ties there: Bill Clinton had skipped the 1992 caucuses because Iowa's Senator Tom Harkin was running; in 1996, Clinton had run unopposed.

With her Senate race looming, she feared a backlash if she signaled her presidential intentions. If New Yorkers thought her presumptuous, they could punish her at the polls and weaken her national standing. A collective decision was made not to discuss a presidential run until she had won reelection, leaving the early pursuit of Iowa to John Edwards and Barack Obama.

The effect of these choices in Iowa became jarringly clear when Penn conducted a poll just after Clinton's Senate reelection that showed her running a very distant third, barely ahead of the state's governor, Tom Vilsack. The poll produced a curious revelation: Iowans rated Clinton at the top of the field on questions of leadership, strength, and experience—but most did not plan to vote for her, because they didn't like her. This presented a basic conundrum: Should Clinton run a positive

campaign, to persuade Iowans to reconsider her? Or should she run a negative campaign that would accuse her opponents of being untrustworthy and under-qualified? Clinton's top advisers never agreed on the answer. Over the course of the campaign, they split into competing factions that drifted in and out of Clinton's favor but always seemed to work at cross purposes. And Clinton herself could never quite decide who was right.

MARCH 2007: THE STRATEGY

Penn had won the trust of both Clintons by guiding Bill Clinton to reelection in 1996 and through the impeachment saga that followed. But his poll-tested centrism and brusque manner aroused suspicion and contempt among many of their advisers. In the White House and during Hillary's Senate races, Penn often prevailed in internal disputes by brandishing his own poll numbers (which his opponents distrusted) and pointing out that he had delivered a Clinton to the White House once before.

From: Geoffrey Garin
Sent: Sat 4/12/2008 11:42 AM
To: Doug Hattaway
Cc: Sarah Hurwitz; Howard Wolfson; Neera Tanden; Phil Singer; Nathan Barr; Mark Penn; Mandy Gru
Molstre; Cheryl Mills
Subject: Process

I don't mean to be an asshole, but...

Senator Clinton has given Howard Wolfson both the responsibility and the authority to make final decisions about how this campaign delivers its messages. In my observations of Howard, she made an extremely wise choice. And there is a basic fact of campaign management that, at the end of the day, someone has to be the decision maker -- input is important and valued, but decision making can't be a free for all if this campaign is to function efficiently and coherently.

Changes to important statements and other critical campaign communications simply have to go through Howard. If, in a pinch, you can't get to him, let me know and I will do what I can. My responsibility is make sure we are pursuing the right objectives at the right time, and I am more than happy to your input on that. But Howard is the person who is ultimately responsible for making sure that we deliver our messages the right way, and I hope everyone will support and respect him in that role. No end runs, and certainly no debating the point beyond when Howard determines it is no longer practical to do so.

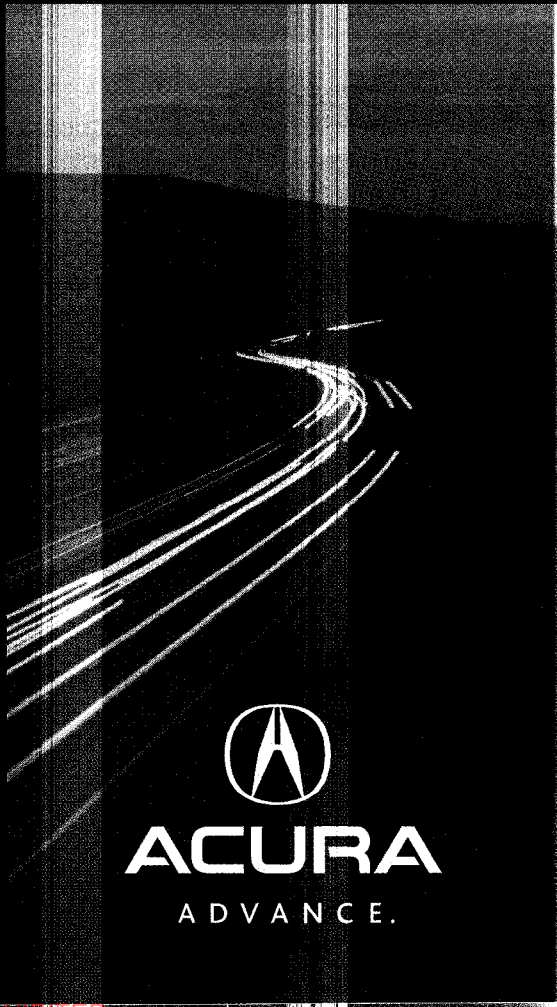
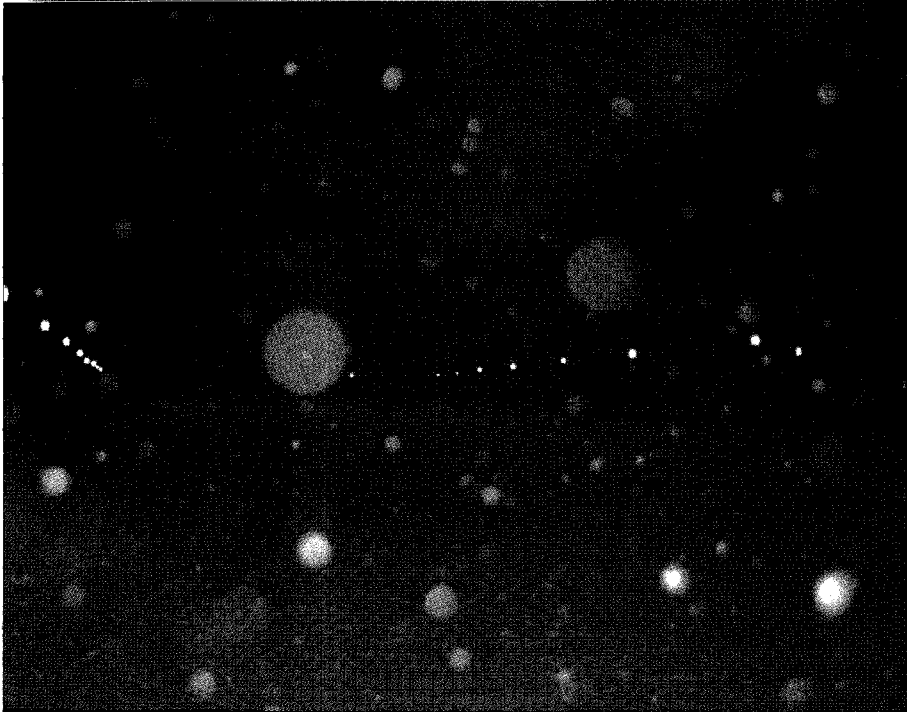
In light of this history, he got off to an inauspicious start when Clinton entered the race in January 2007, by demanding the title "chief strategist" (previously he had been one of several "senior advisers") and presenting each of his senior colleagues with a silver bowl inscribed with the words of Horace Mann: "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity."

Penn had clear ideas about how to engineer a win for Clinton, in Iowa and beyond. Obama had eclipsed Edwards right

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out of the gate and was experiencing the full measure of “next JFK” hype. In a memo dated March 19, 2007, Penn laid out an “Overall Strategy for Winning” built upon a coalition of voters he called “Invisible Americans,” a sort of reprise of Bill Clinton’s “forgotten middle class”:

As this race unfolds, the winning coalition for us is clearer and clearer. There are three demographic variables that explain almost all of the voters in the primary—gender, party, and income. Race is a factor as well, but we are fighting hard to neutralize it.

We are the candidate of people with needs.

We win women, lower classes, and Democrats (about 3 to 1 in our favor).

Obama wins men, upper class, and independents (about 2 to 1 in his favor).

Edwards draws from these groups as well.

Our winning strategy builds from a base of women, builds on top of that a lower and middle class constituency, and seeks to minimize his advantages with the high class democrats.

If we double perform with WOMEN, LOWER AND MIDDLE CLASS VOTERS, then we have about 55% of the voters.

The reason the Invisible Americans is so powerful is that it speaks to exactly how you can be a champion for those in needs [sic]. He may be the JFK in the race, but you are the Bobby.

Clinton was already under attack for an attitude of “inevitability”—the charge being that she imperiously viewed the primary process as a ratifying formality and would not deign to compete for what she felt she was owed. Penn’s memo makes clear that what she intended to project was “leadership” and “strength,” and that he had carefully created an image for her with that in mind. He believed that he had identified a winning coalition and knew which buttons to press to mobilize it:

- 1) Start with a base of women.
 - a. For these women you represent a breaking of barriers
 - b. The winnowing out of the most competent and qualified in an unfair, male dominated world
 - c. The infusion of a woman and a mother’s sensibilities into a world of war and neglect
- 2) Add on a base of lower and middle class voters
 - a. You see them; you care about them
 - b. You were one of them, it is your history
 - c. You are all about their concerns (healthcare, education, energy, child care, college etc.)
 - d. Sense of patriotism, Americana
- 3) Play defensively with the men and upper class voters
 - a. Strength to end the war the right way

- b. Connect on the problems of the global economy, economics
- c. Foreign policy expert
- d. Unions

Contest the black vote at every opportunity. Keep him pinned down there.

Organize on college campuses. We may not be number 1 there, but we have a lot of fans—more than enough to sustain an organization in every college.

Penn’s prescription is notable because it is the rare instance of a Clinton campaign goal that panned out—the coalition she ended up winning a year later is the one described here. Penn’s memo is also notable for its tone: it reinforces rather than confronts the Clintons’ biases. “The biggest problem we have is the troika that has been set up to tear Hillary down,” he wrote.

It is a vast right and left wing conspiracy. Listening to Brit Hume say that Obama is surging while Hillary failed to do X is almost comical and certainly transparent. The right knows Obama is unelectable except perhaps against Attila the Hun, and a third party would come in then anyway.

By contrast, top consultants like Karl Rove usually aim to temper their clients’ biases with a cold dose of realism. I suspect the damaging persecution complex that both Clintons displayed drew much of its sustenance from memos like this one.

Penn also left no doubt about where he stood on the question of a positive versus negative strategy. He made the rather astonishing suggestion to target Obama’s “lack of American roots”:

All of these articles about his boyhood in Indonesia and his life in Hawaii are geared towards showing his background is diverse, multicultural and putting that in a new light.

Save it for 2050.

It also exposes a very strong weakness for him—his roots to basic American values and culture are at best limited. I cannot imagine America electing a president during a time of war who is not at his center fundamentally American in his thinking and in his values. He told the people of NH yesterday he has a Kansas accent because his mother was from there. His mother lived in many states as far as we can tell—but this is an example of the nonsense he uses to cover this up.

How we could give some life to this contrast without turning negative:

Every speech should contain the line you were born in the middle of America to the middle class in the middle of the last century. And talk about the basic bargain as about the deeply American values you grew up with, learned as a child and that drive you today. Values of fairness, compassion, responsibility, giving back.

Let's explicitly own 'American' in our programs, the speeches and the values. He doesn't. Make this a new American Century, the American Strategic Energy Fund. Let's use our logo to make some flags we can give out. Let's add flag symbols to the backgrounds.

Clinton wisely chose not to go this route. But the defining clash within her campaign quickly became the disagreement over how hard to attack Obama, if at all. Invariably, Penn and Bill Clinton pressed for aggressive confrontation to tear Obama down, while senior advisers like Harold Ickes, Patti Solis Doyle, Mandy Grunwald, and Howard Wolfson counseled restraint and an emphasis on her softer side that would lift her up. The two strategies were directly at odds.

On March 29, Ickes, who oversaw the targeting and budget operation with the campaign's manager, Solis Doyle, circulated a list of the campaign's "Key Assumptions." (Though Penn was "chief strategist," he was a paid contractor, and thus barred from most targeting and budget planning.) Ickes believed that Iowa and New Hampshire could determine Clinton's fate, and that the February 5 Super Tuesday primaries would determine the nominee. No mention was made of the delegates or the later-caucus states that actually figured so decisively.

Ickes seemed attuned to the asymmetric risk that accompanies overwhelming front-runner status: the collapse of momentum that would accompany an unexpected loss. He posited that Edwards and Obama could sustain losing Iowa and New Hampshire but worried that Clinton could not; he urged that she spend "substantial" time in Iowa; and he recommended a contingency plan that would haunt the campaign when his own budget team didn't fulfill it. Noting the difficulty of raising more than \$75 million before Iowa, Ickes stressed the need to maintain a \$25 million reserve, presumably as insurance against a setback. The campaign wound up raising more than \$100 million—but, according to *The New York Times*, by the time Iowa was lost, \$106 million had been spent. The \$25 million reserve had vanished, and the campaign was effectively insolvent.

APRIL–MAY 2007: PUZZLING OVER IOWA

By April 8, Penn seemed to have absorbed the criticism of Clinton as behaving imperiously, as well as the emerging importance of the "change" theme Obama was touting. "Show more of the happy warrior," he counseled in a memo.

----- Original Message -----

From: Barnett, Robert <RBarnett@hillaryclinton.com>; Howard Wolfson <hwolfson@hillaryclinton.com>; Mark Penn <markjpenn@hillaryclinton.com>; Neera Tanden <ntanden@hillaryclinton.com>; Mandy Grunwald <GrunCom@hillaryclinton.com>; Maggie Williams <mwilliams@hillaryclinton.com>; Cheryl Mills <cmills@hillaryclinton.com>; Doug Sosnik <dsosnik@hillaryclinton.com>; Harold Ickes <hickes@hillaryclinton.com>; habedine@hillaryclinton.com <habedine@hillaryclinton.com>; Jay Carson <jcarson@hillaryclinton.com>; PSinger@hillaryclinton.com <PSinger@hillaryclinton.com>; Patti Solis Doyle <JLegum@hillaryclinton.com>; JLegum@hillaryclinton.com <JLegum@hillaryclinton.com>; alewis@hillaryclinton.com <alewis@hillaryclinton.com>; gcecil@hillaryclinton.com <gcecil@hillaryclinton.com>
Cc: Jake Sullivan <jsullivan@hillaryclinton.com>; Hillary Rodham Clinton <@hillaryclinton.com>
Sent: Thu Mar 06 09:00:43 2008
Subject: STOP IT !!!!

I have help my tongue for weeks. After this morning's WP story, no longer. This makes me sick.

This circular firing squad that is occurring is unattractive, unprofessional, unconscionable, and unacceptable. I know each and every one of you to be better than this. It must stop.

After this campaign is over, there will be plenty of time to access blame or claim credit. (Although I regard such after-the-fact behavior as similarly unprofessional.) Right now, we have a real chance to win this nomination. That is where our focus should be -- not on each other.

By this behavior, we are failing our donors who have put their time and money on the line. The voters who have placed their future and their trust in us. The young people in the campaign who look to the "grown ups" for leadership -- and have commented to me on how disappointed they are. Ourselves by making us look unprofessional and foolish. And, most importantly, our candidate to whom we own our attention, our loyalty, and our best.

My message is simple -- STOP IT. Please.

"Let's talk more about a movement for change coming from the people. It's not a Republican movement or a Democratic movement, but a broad-based movement centered on the idea that America is ready for change."

He also seemed cognizant of the growing power of the Web, and, straining for hipness, took at a stab at brainstorming a "viral" strategy:

I CAN BE PRESIDENT. This idea has potential for a viral campaign among moms—it is about your sons and your daughters believing that they too can be president. Your success paves the way for them ... We are making a video with celebrities to launch this program in a FUN way, with great clips from kids and from celebrities saying what they would do if president.

Once again, he returned to the "Invisible Americans":

Invisibles—need to use this as a creative vehicle to involve people—This can be a cool button where people appear/disappear. Mandy is working on an early spot that would give this some drama to the idea that it's the people's turn to be seen again.

With Obama's popularity and fund-raising strength becoming clearer by the day, Penn started advising Clinton in areas technically outside his purview. He began what would become a contentious, and ultimately unsuccessful, push to persuade Clinton to hire "a friendly TV face"—a clear jab at Howard

Wolfson, the chief spokesman. He also urged Clinton to gather more data about the voters in Iowa and New Hampshire and suggested major "issue speeches" in both states.

Penn wasn't the only one worried about Iowa. On May 21, the deputy campaign director, Mike Henry, wrote a prescient memo noting the cost and difficulty of running there and proposing that Clinton skip the caucus. The memo was leaked to *The New York Times*. Henry had estimated (conservatively, as it turned out) that Iowa would require more than \$15 million and 75 days of the candidate's presence, and would not provide any financial or organizational edge. "This effort may bankrupt the campaign and provide little if any political advantage," he warned. When the story appeared, Clinton felt compelled to publicly recommit, thereby upping Iowa's significance even further.

SUMMER-FALL 2007: BATTLING OVER IRAQ

Clinton's staff spent the summer battling itself over how to take on Obama, and battling the media over her record on Iraq and just about everything else. Penn had confronted Obama's chief strategist, David Axelrod, at a Harvard symposium in March with the charge that since arriving in the Senate, Obama had voted no differently on Iraq than Clinton had. "Are we going to ... tell everyone out there the truth about ... who voted for what, when, or are we going to selectively tell people?" he demanded.

As his plane was about to lift off, it was Bill Clinton—not Hillary—who issued the decisive order about the 3 a.m. ad: 'Let's go with it.'

The gambit failed, because Penn was practically the only Clinton adviser eager to push the Iraq issue; the rest believed it was a debate Clinton would lose. The fact that Edwards had apologized for having voted for the war resolution further isolated her. Penn insisted that an apology would be "a sign of weakness," and Clinton never seriously entertained the notion. But the lingering contrast with Obama did not favor her, particularly among Iowa's liberal caucus-goers, and the attacks she did launch only highlighted this fundamental disparity.

The internal discord over whether to attack Obama led some of her own staff to spin reporters to try to downplay the significance of her criticisms. The result for Clinton was the worst of both worlds: the conflicting message exacerbated her reputation for negativity without affording her whatever benefits a sustained attack might have yielded.

Clinton's epic and costly battles with the press—and her husband's, as well—had their genesis in this incoherence. About the only thing the campaign's warring factions *did*

agree on was that the press ought to be criticizing Obama more severely. The more the Clinton team became paralyzed by conflict, the more it was forced to rely on the press to write negative stories that would weaken Obama—to, in effect, perform the very function it was unable to do for itself. This led the campaign to aggressively pressure reporters throughout 2007 and launch the outright attacks against the press that backfired once the primaries began.

DECEMBER 2007: DISASTER LOOMS

Inside the campaign, Penn was losing the debate. His insistence that Obama's mounting attacks called for an expanded press operation was seen as an attempt to weaken his rivals, and he was punished with leaks suggesting that Clinton might dump him as chief strategist. Meanwhile, Clinton had nervously accepted the advice from her Iowa campaign staff that negative attacks would backfire.

On December 1, Clinton and her husband attended a private dinner with the influential *Des Moines Register* editorial board. Seated at opposite ends of a long table, they were stunned to hear journalists praise the skill and efficiency of the Obama and Edwards campaigns and question why Clinton's own operation was so passive.

On the next morning's staff conference call, Clinton exploded, demanding to know why the campaign wasn't on the attack. Solis Doyle was put on a plane to Iowa the next day to oversee the closing weeks. Within hours of the call, the panicked staff produced a blistering attack on Obama for what it characterized as evidence of his overweening lust for power: he had written a kindergarten essay titled "I Want to Become President." The campaign was mocked for weeks.

One story line that has featured prominently in the postmortems is Harold Ickes's attempts to alert the campaign to the importance of the party's complicated system of allotting delegates—a system that Obama's campaign cleverly exploited, by focusing on delegate-rich caucus states. Ickes wrote a series of memos, fatefully ignored, that drew attention to this matter. Nothing I was privy to suggests that anyone else gave it more than passing attention until just before Iowa (though as a cost-saving measure, the budget team halted polling in many of the caucus states they expected Obama to win). Then, on December 22—just 12 days before Iowa—Ickes tried again, in a memo that seems to be introducing the subject of delegates for the first time:

Assuming that after Iowa and New Hampshire the presidential nominating contest narrows to two competitive candidates who remain locked in a highly contested election through 5 February, the focus of the campaign and press will shift to the delegate count. The dedication of resources

(including candidate time) should be influenced, in part, by factors that will afford HRC an advantage in acquiring more delegates compared to her opponent(s).

The advice finally registered—but it was too late.

JANUARY 2008: COLLAPSE AND COMEBACK

In the hours after she finished third in Iowa, on January 3, Clinton seized control of her campaign, even as her advisers continued fighting about whether to go negative. The next morning's conference call began with awkward silence, and then Penn recapped the damage and mumbled something about how badly they'd been hurt by young voters.

Mustering enthusiasm, Clinton declared that the campaign was mistaken not to have competed harder for the youth vote and that—overruling her New Hampshire staff—she would take questions at town-hall meetings designed to draw “comparative,” but not negative, contrasts with Obama. Hearing little response, Clinton began to grow angry, according to a participant's notes. She complained of being outmaneuvered in Iowa and being painted as the establishment candidate. The race, she insisted, now had “three front-runners.” More silence ensued. “This has been a very instructive call, talking to myself,” she snapped, and hung up.

In the days leading up to her stunning New Hampshire comeback, on January 8, Clinton's retail politicking, at last on full display, seemed to make the most difference. But any hope of renewal was short-lived. Not long after New Hampshire, in a senior-staff meeting that both Clintons attended at the campaign's Arlington headquarters, Ickes announced to his stunned colleagues, “The cupboard is empty.” The campaign had burned through its money just getting past Iowa. And the news got worse: despite spending \$100 million, it had somehow failed to establish ground operations in all but a handful of upcoming states. Now, urgently needing them, it lacked the money.

Clinton ended up agreeing to lend the campaign \$5 million. But even this would enable it to compete in only some of the February 5 states. Though under heavy pressure to fire her campaign manager and chief strategist, Clinton wouldn't drop the ax. She layered on still more advisers, including her former White House chief of staff, Maggie Williams, who settled uncomfortably alongside Solis Doyle.

On January 21, Guy Cecil, a veteran operative who had been brought aboard in September, circulated a memo laying out the game plan for February 5. Now fully alive to the challenge ahead, Cecil split the map into three categories: Obama base states, battleground states, and Clinton base states (of which there were four—Arkansas, California, New Jersey, and New York).

To maximize delegates cheaply, Cecil fell back on trying to drive up voter turnout in Clinton states. He also seems to have been the first person to spot the alarming possibility that blowout wins in weak Clinton districts could yield huge

delegate gains for Obama. But here he was essentially flying blind. The Clinton campaign had long since ceased polling in unfriendly states, and now had to make do with guesswork. Cecil estimated that Clinton could net 58 delegates on February 5, significantly expanding her narrow lead.

FEBRUARY 2008: CHAOS

On February 4, Ickes circulated a “framework” of the post-Super Tuesday strategy, stoically noting that “given the lack of polling information for post 5 Feb states, these projections are based on best estimates.” The campaign was collectively holding its breath. Ickes wrote:

Assuming HRC's lead in super delegates holds and continue [sic] to increase even slowly, she will continue to lead BO in total delegates at every step. We are in for a real fight, but assuming she at least achieves the projections for Tuesday and given some breaks, it is a fight that she can win.

On Super Tuesday, however, Clinton fell well short of projections, and according to NBC News, Obama finished the day having netted about 10 delegates and narrowed the gap. The slow-motion collapse of Clinton's candidacy began to accelerate.

On February 10, Clinton finally fired Solis Doyle and moved Williams in—but did not heed calls to fire Penn, enraging Solis Doyle's many loyalists. At this crucial point, long-simmering feuds burst into the open. On February 11, Williams's first day on the job, Phil Singer, Wolfson's deputy and a man notorious for his tirades at reporters, blew up in Wolfson's office and screamed obscenities at his boss before throwing open the door to direct his ire at the campaign's policy director, Neera Tanden, an ally of Solis Doyle. “Fuck you and the whole fucking cabal!” he shouted, according to several Clinton staffers. In the end, he climbed onto a chair and screamed at the entire staff before storming out.

The same day, Philip Bennett, the managing editor of *The Washington Post*, sent Williams a letter formally complaining that Singer had maligned one of his reporters by spreading unfounded rumors about her (apparently in retaliation for an accurate—and prescient—story that had noted, long before anyone else, Clinton's tendency to burn through money). Fearing for his deputy's job, Wolfson intercepted the letter, though Bennett eventually got a copy to Williams. Singer disappeared and was presumed fired. But a week later, he made amends and rejoined the campaign. “When the house is on fire, it's better to have a psychotic fireman than no fireman at all,” Wolfson explained to a colleague.

As the days wore on, morale deteriorated. In state after state, the staff watched helplessly as huge leads dwindled to nothing in the face of Obama's massive outlays. Toward the end of a February 21 debate, amid what would prove to be a string of 12 straight losses, Clinton spoke of the race wistfully,

as though resigned to losing. The press took this as a signal that the end was near—not at all what she meant.

On the call two days later, the candidate was furious, this time at a press corps she accused of purposely misreading her designs in an effort to force her from the race. “They’re taking out their revenge on Bill,” she fumed, according to a participant’s notes. Later that day at a press conference, Clinton left no doubts about her purpose, lighting into Obama. Penn’s star was ascendant.

MARCH–APRIL 2008: PENN TAKES COMMAND

Penn believed that white men (“beer drinkers”) had been up for grabs since Edwards had bowed out, on January 30; one basis for his disagreement with colleagues who wanted to showcase Clinton’s softer side was that doing so would not attract white men. “The idea,” he wrote, “that this can be won all on smiles, emotions, and empathy is simply wrong.”

Penn created his infamous “3 a.m.” ad, questioning Obama’s readiness for a crisis, with these voters in mind. Before presenting the ad to the senior staff, he secured Hillary Clinton’s approval to broadcast it. But even Clinton’s newfound willingness to attack did not prevent Penn from being challenged. His detractors had two rationales: that attacks would look desperate and drive up Clinton’s already lofty “unfavorable” ratings; and that if she continued down this path she would irreparably damage her reputation and possibly that of her party’s nominee.

In the days leading up to Ohio and Texas, the campaign kept arguing over whether to air the ad. With the deadline looming, Bill Clinton, speaking from a cell phone as his plane

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sat on a runway, led a conference call on Thursday, February 28, in which he had both sides present their

case. As his plane was about to lift off, it was Bill Clinton—not Hillary—who issued the decisive order: “Let’s go with it.”

On March 4, Clinton carried the primaries in Ohio and Texas, and vowed to remain on the offensive. She chided her reluctant advisers: “A general alone cannot assault a hill.” In a triumphant memo afterward, Penn brandished his sword: “We have begun, but must now in earnest, show that their image of Obama Camelot is simply nothing but campaign pitter-patter.”

The celebration was dampened, however, by a front-page headline in *The Washington Post*: “Even in Victory, Clinton Team Is Battling Itself.” Rather than spotlighting the resurgent candidate, the March 6 piece examined “the battle on the inside”—particularly the towering contempt for Penn.

At nine o’clock that morning, Robert Barnett, the eminent Washington attorney prized by the Clintons for his years of wisdom and discretion, finally blew his top and fired off an e-mail to Hillary Clinton and her senior staff:

STOP IT!!!! I have help [sic] my tongue for weeks. After this morning’s WP story, no longer. This makes me sick. This circular

firing squad that is occurring is unattractive, unprofessional, unconscionable, and unacceptable ... It must stop.

Yet the clashes and paralysis continued. In the aftermath of Obama’s historic race speech on March 18, Sheila Jackson Lee, a Texas congresswoman, urged Clinton to deliver a speech of her own on gender. Clinton appeared very much to want to do this, and solicited the advice of her staff, which characteristically split. The campaign went back and forth for weeks. Opponents argued that her oratory couldn’t possibly match Obama’s, and proponents countered that she would get credit simply for trying, inspire legions of women to her cause, and highlight an issue that everyone in the campaign fiercely believed was hurting them—sexism. But Clinton never made a decision, and seemed troubled by the concern of Ann Lewis, perhaps her most venerable feminist adviser, who opposed such a speech for fear that it would equate sexism with racism—another contrast with Obama that Clinton feared she would lose.

Even in the midst of chaos, Penn was at last where he wanted to be: steering the campaign. After the death-defying wins in Texas and Ohio, he delivered a strategy update on March 30 charting Clinton’s “Path to Victory”:

1. Win PA, WV, KY, PR
2. Perform well in OR, NC, SD, MONT, GUAM
3. Pick up 25 Delegates
4. Resolve or Revote MI, FL to close at least 30 Delegates including Supers
5. Be ahead in Popular Vote inc. MI and FL
6. Be ahead in delegates from primaries (his lead will be entirely from caucuses)
7. Be ahead of him against McCain (why we will contrast with McCain on ec, Iraq)
8. Increase concern about what he would do to Congressional Races (trying test now in white rural districts)
9. Will have won every big state and have coalition of Catholics, working class, Latinos, and women—the key electorates.
10. Super-delegates must see Obama as a doomsday scenario to vote en masse for HRC

Then he shifted gears and went after his colleagues within the campaign:

Does anyone believe it is possible to win the nomination without, over these two months, raising all these issues on him? A “nice” campaign that wins the states along [sic] that can be won—will that be enough or do serious issues have to be raised about him?

If you believe that serious issues need to be raised then we have to raise them without continual hesitation and we should be pushing the envelope. Won’t a single tape of [the Reverend Jeremiah] Wright going off on America with Obama sitting there be a game ender?



One of America's Best Selling Vehicles.

Bulldozer sales in America have been booming. Road builders need them to level rolling hills into concrete interchanges and bypasses. Developers need them to turn farmland into housing developments and shopping malls. You can find big earthmoving equipment throughout America, turning our most picturesque land into suburban sprawl, while adding to some of the worst traffic problems in the world. But traffic is just one of the problems facing America as a result of population growth wildly out of control. Schools and emergency rooms are bursting at the seams, and public infrastructure is under great stress. Property taxes are on the rise. Yet the bulldozers keep on coming, ripping up some of the most beautiful farms and forests in the world and turning them into concrete and asphalt suburbs. But with U.S. census projections indicating our population will explode from 300 million today to 400 million in thirty years and 600 million before 2100*, bulldozer sales should keep on booming. Unless we take action today. The Pew Hispanic Research Center projects 82% of the country's massive population increase, between 2005 and 2050, will result from immigration. And with every new U.S. resident, whether from births or immigration, comes further degradation of America's natural treasures. There's not much we can do to reclaim the hundreds of millions of acres already destroyed. But we can do something about what's left. Visit our websites to find out how you can help.

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300 million people today, 600 million tomorrow. Think about it.

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Many people (Peter Hart excluded) believe under the surface that 20 years sitting there with Goddamn America would make him unelectable by itself.

Four days later, Penn's momentum collided with *The Wall Street Journal*, when the paper exposed his lobbying activity on behalf of a free-trade agreement with Colombia that Clinton opposed. He was stripped of the "chief strategist" title, though he maintained an advisory role, and Geoff Garin, a veteran Democratic operative, replaced him at the helm of the campaign.

The absence of clear lines of authority meant that another lurking problem was ignored for too long. The Democratic National Committee had disallowed the results from Florida and Michigan, to punish the states for holding primaries earlier than its rules permitted. Though Ickes had monitored the developments throughout 2007, the status of the delegates from the two states did not become vitally important until Clinton fell behind. Because she had won both states (even though it was clear that they were technically meaningless "beauty contests"), her campaign made the assumption, routinely reflected in e-mails and memos from top strategists, that it would be able to formalize her claim to the delegates.

On February 25, a pair of Clinton advisers began sending a series of increasingly urgent memos, which were given to me by a recipient sympathetic to Solis Doyle as a way of illustrating that strategic mistakes continued even after her dismissal. The first memo, from Philippe Reines and Andrew Shapiro, worried that Clinton's anticipated wins in Texas and Ohio on March 4 would not meaningfully narrow Obama's delegate lead—a fact sure to sap momentum once the initial excitement of victory passed. They proposed that Clinton, from a position of strength immediately after her wins, challenge Obama to accept Michigan and Florida revotes. Such a move "preempts Obama's reiteration on March 5th that they are still up 100 plus delegates and that we can't win," they noted. "The press will love the rematch, like Rocky II."

On March 4, as Ohio and Texas were voting, the advisers, who now included senior strategist Doug Hattaway, circulated another memo formalizing what they now called the "Florigan Plan." Absent a revote, the memo warned, "we cannot secure enough delegates to win; we cannot overtake him; the math simply doesn't work ... it is imperative that we provide ... a clear and tenable answer to the single most important question we face." But March 5 passed without any action. On March 10, sensing that the opportunity to reclaim the Florigan delegates had already vanished, the group again urged pressure for a revote. On the next day's call, Clinton asked for an update on Florida and Michigan. Exasperated by the meager response, she erupted once again and insisted that something be done. A week later, Clinton made an impromptu visit to Detroit to publicly highlight the lack of a resolution.

The campaign did not launch an organized offensive until nine weeks later, on May 21. But by then Clinton was operating

from a position of weakness. Rather than greeting it as *Rocky II*, the press covered her bid for a revote as a "last-gasp strategy," which soon failed.

MAY 2008: LAST CHANCE

Geoff Garin, the new leader, soon encountered the old problems. Obama remained the front-runner, and Clinton's communications staff disagreed on how to turn back the tide of tough stories. Garin was appalled at the open feuding and leaking. "I don't mean to be an asshole," he wrote in an e-mail to the senior staff. "But ... Senator Clinton has given Howard Wolfson both the responsibility and the authority to make final decisions about how this campaign delivers its message." On the strategic front, Garin sided with the coalition opposed to Penn's call to confront Obama, and he had numbers to support his reasoning. Polls showed that a majority of voters now distrusted Clinton.

Though Clinton carried Pennsylvania on April 22, aided by Obama's "bitter" comment, Garin believed that a positive strategy could rebuild trust in her in North Carolina and Indiana, the next big hurdles. The campaign was deeply in debt, but Garin convinced Clinton that if she committed several million dollars to his strategy, they would win Indiana, pull to within single digits in North Carolina, and live to fight on. In an April 25 e-mail outlining his approach, which would be very different from Penn's, he wrote:

We are definitely moving in the right direction, and I believe we are on track to narrow this to single digits—especially if we fund a competitive effort in [North Carolina].

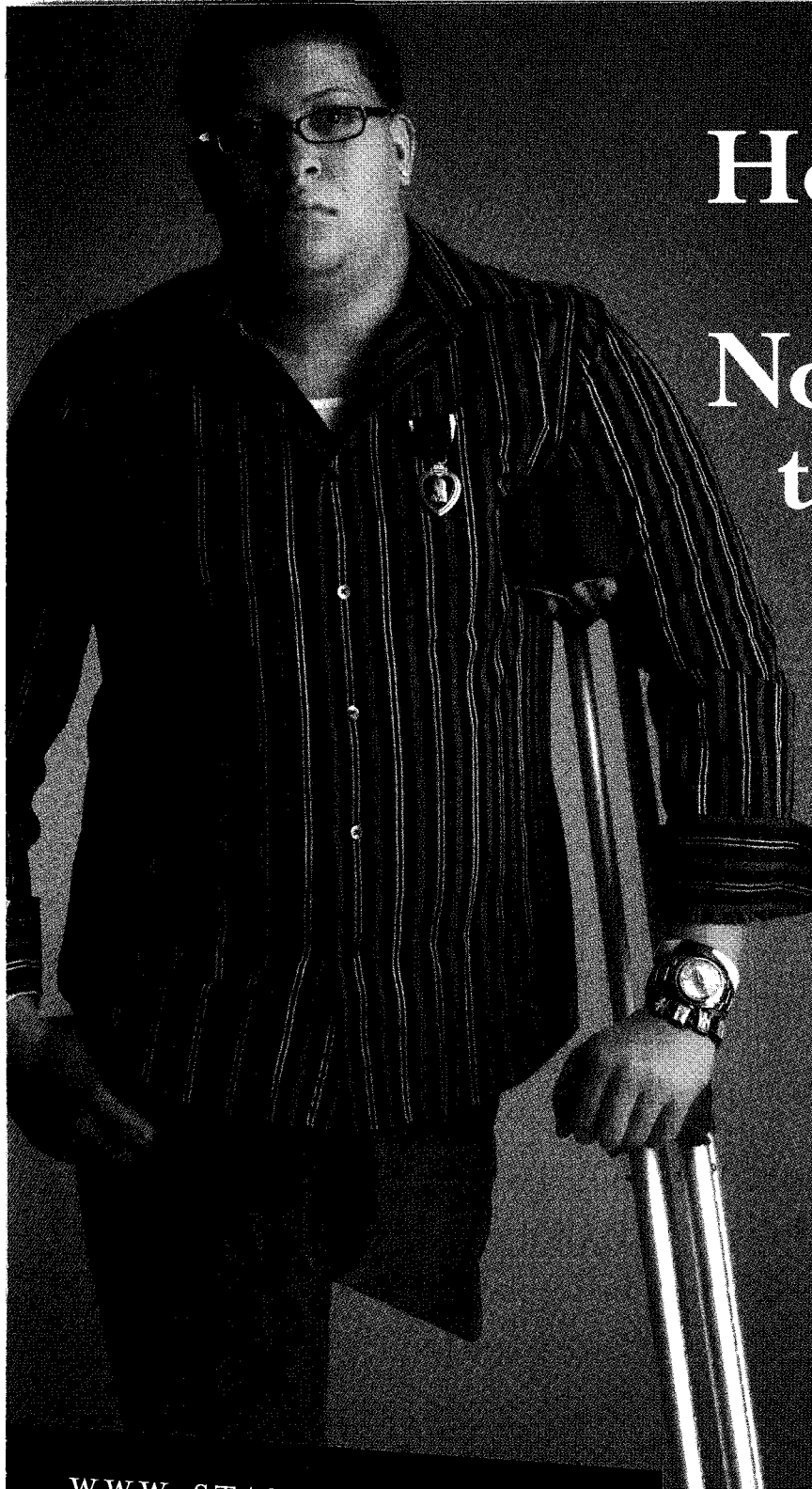
Our white targets are slightly more male than female, and definitely skew under age 50 ... About 20% of all whites are still moveable to Clinton.

But on May 6, the narrowness of Clinton's victory in Indiana and her blowout loss in North Carolina effectively ended the race. She finished out the primary calendar, with Garin gently steering the campaign into port on June 3.

That evening, as she delivered the non-concession speech that awkwardly preceded the real one several days later, Clinton seemed to finally embrace the ideas of her erstwhile chief strategist (who was, even in his reduced role, preparing one final attempt to win the argument, this time in a formal presentation for the superdelegates). Her campaign at an end, Clinton seemed to reach all the way back to the beginning, to Penn's "Invisible Americans":

I want to turn this economy around. I want health care for every American. I want every child to live up to his or her God-given potential, and I want the nearly 18 million Americans who voted for me to be respected, to be heard, and no longer to be invisible. ▀

Joshua Green is an Atlantic senior editor.



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for us.
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to fight
for him.

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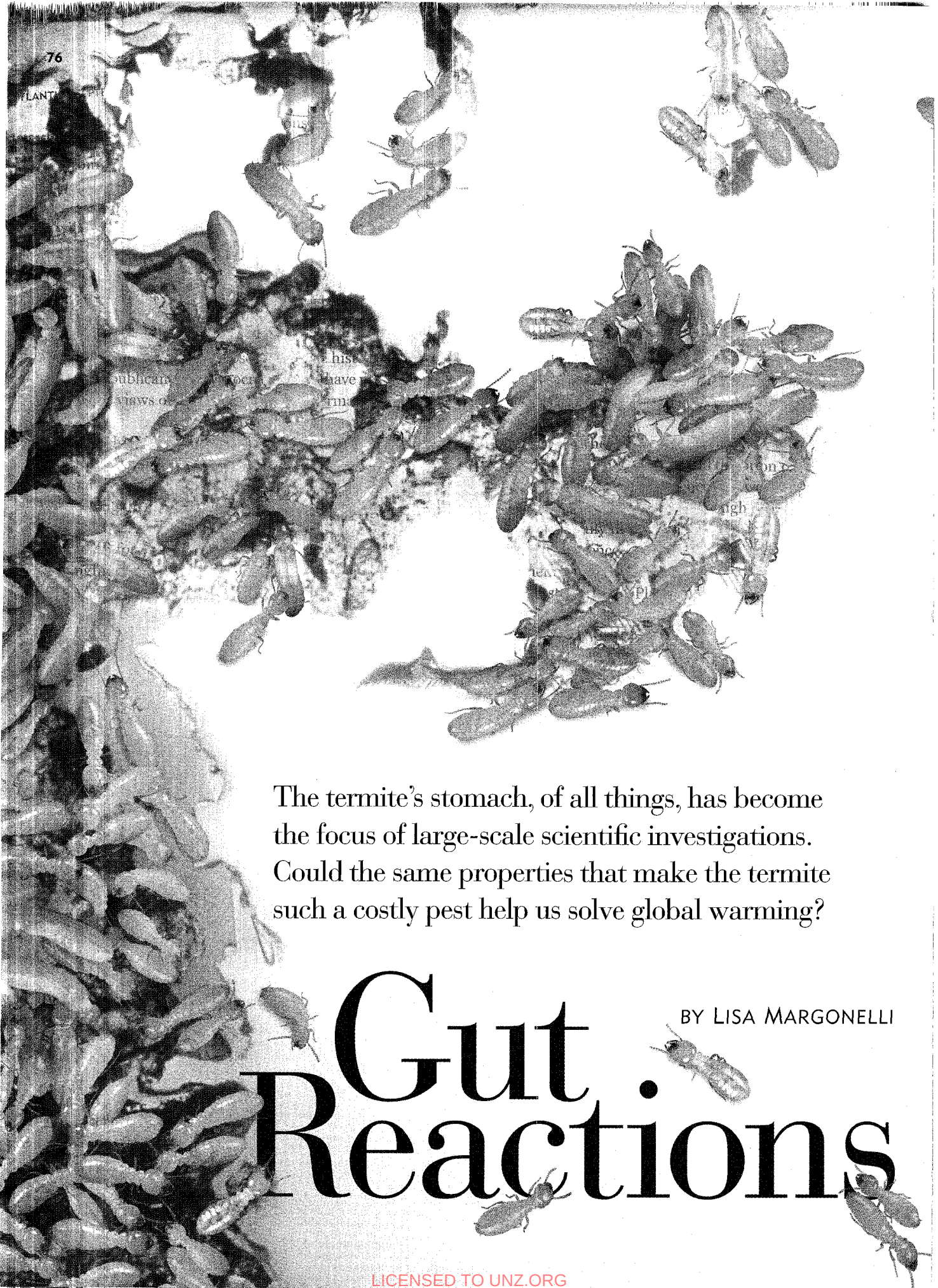
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The termite's stomach, of all things, has become the focus of large-scale scientific investigations. Could the same properties that make the termite such a costly pest help us solve global warming?

BY LISA MARGONELLI

Gut . Reactions



For more than a hundred million years, termites have lived in obscurity, noticed only by the occasional hungry anteater or, more recently, by dismayed homeowners. Other social insects, such as bees and ants, are celebrated for their industriousness and engineering feats, but popular culture has not gotten around to cheering on termites for theirs—even though they build mounds as tall as 20 feet, which may be oriented north-south as accurately as if plotted with a compass, in order to maximize heat from the sun. The extraordinary powers evolution has bestowed on termites—some protect the mound by spraying chemicals from nozzles on their heads at intruders, while others have snapping mandibles that can decapitate invading ants—have similarly failed to elevate their status. On the contrary: last year, scientists at the London Natural History Museum called termites “social cockroaches” and proposed reclassifying them, in a paper brusquely titled “Death of an Order.”

The more closely one examines the termite, the more mysteries one finds. In some species, if a termite discovers a contamination in the mound, it alerts everyone else, and a hygiene frenzy begins. As a disease passes through a mound, the survivors vaccinate the young with their antennae. When a mound’s queen is no longer capable of reproduction, the workers may gather around her distended body and lick her to death.

The greatest mystery of all is found in the worker termite's third gut, which is delineated by an intricately structured stomach valve, as unique from species to species as individual snowflakes are and, in its way, just as lovely. The size of a sesame seed, the third gut contains a dense mush of symbiotic microbes. Many of these microbes live nowhere else on Earth; they depend on adult termites to pass them on to the young by means of a "woodshake," a microbial slurry.

This microbial mush may be a treasure trove for the human race. Recently, sophisticated genetic sequencing produced an inventory of more than 80,000 genes, spanning some 300 microbial species, from the guts of Costa Rican termites. These findings, published last November in the journal *Nature*, got a lot of attention, not for the quantity of microorganisms—after all, the human mouth contains 600 species of bacteria—but for their complexity, and in particular for the fact that among them are 500 genes for enzymes able to break down the cellulose in wood and grasses.

wrecking yard, stripping away sugars, CO₂, hydrogen, and methane with 90 percent efficiency. The little biorefineries inside each termite allow the insects to eat up \$11 billion in U.S. property every year. But some scientists and policy makers believe they may also make the termite a sort of biotech Rumpelstiltskin, able to spin straw—or grass, or wood by-products—into something much more valuable. Offer a termite this page, and its microbial helpers will break it down into two liters of hydrogen, enough to drive more than six miles in a fuel-cell car. If we could turn wood waste into fuel with even a fraction of the termite's efficiency, we could run our economy on sawdust, lawn clippings, and old magazines.

And so the termite may be poised for its moment in the sun. Speaking last year about moving toward a biofuel economy, Energy Secretary Samuel W. Bodman pointed to the termite-to-tank concept, asserting, "We know this can be done." Another official called it a promising "transformational discovery." Suddenly the termite is everywhere, from *Popular Science*

Offer a termite this page, and its microbial helpers
will break it down into two liters of hydrogen—
enough to drive six miles in a fuel-cell car.

With oil prices at historic highs, the quest is on to turn such plant materials into a replacement for gasoline—call it grassoline. Since 2007, U.S. energy policy has been shaped by the premise that we can brew enough biofuels to replace 35 billion gallons of gasoline by 2017, and 60 billion by 2030. Corn ethanol has been a bust, blamed for wasting water, exhausting croplands, and causing tortilla shortages in Mexico and rice shortages in Asia. For all these problems, it currently contributes the equivalent of only about 4.2 billion gallons of gas a year. And the carbon dioxide emitted in the process of growing and fermenting corn and then distilling and burning ethanol is nearly as much as that emitted by extracting, refining, and burning gasoline.

Wood and grasses seem to hold more promise. They contain chains of thousands of glucose molecules that could be made into so-called cellulosic ethanol and then burned like gasoline, while releasing just 15 percent of gasoline's greenhouse-gas emissions. But there's a catch. Wood has evolved to keep its sugars to itself, covering them with lignin—a substance that gives cell walls rigidity—and then locking them in a matrix of cellulose and hemicellulose protected by complex chemical bonds. Because these sugars are so hard to get at, our output of cellulosic ethanol is still, after decades of research, just 1.5 million gallons a year—less than 1 percent of one day's gasoline consumption.

But where humans have failed, the termite succeeds—spectacularly. A worker termite tears off a piece of wood with its mandibles and lets its guts work on it like a molecular

to *Congressional Quarterly Today* to *Wired*. With the audience for energy speeches and articles so small and wonky, it's too soon to say that the little bug has exactly become a celebrity (although it did recently rate a footnote in *Vanity Fair*). But in some circles, it has attained a certain status as the pest that could solve our energy problems, transforming geopolitics and agriculture in the process. "Deus ex termita," you might say.

Perhaps—but it won't be easy. Last year, in an initiative that has been compared to the Manhattan Project, the Department of Energy founded three Bioenergy Research Centers, which collectively house scientists from seven government labs, 18 universities, and several private companies, and are aimed at making cellulosic ethanol competitive with gasoline within five years. The effort, which has \$375 million in funding, is focused on plumbing the structures of woods and grasses and learning how various creatures break them down; genetic modifications, scientists hope, could then enable us to make cheaper fuels. The centers are expected to come up with ideas that can be commercialized—actually making them more like Bell Labs, say, than like the Manhattan Project.

Started two years earlier, the termite project described in *Nature* is based on the same model of public and private collaboration, and is now an important part of the bioenergy initiative. Indeed, termites might be seen as an "indicator species" for the larger effort—and, as scientists are learning, they are full of devilish details and vexing complications.

In 2005, the microbial ecologist Falk Warnecke, of the Department of Energy's Joint Genome Institute, traveled with researchers from Caltech and the San Diego biotech company Diversa to Costa Rica, where they opened up a termite nest in a tree. The group dissected 165 worker termites, freezing the contents of their third guts in liquid nitrogen and shipping them to Diversa's lab. After extracting the DNA from the microbial cells, Diversa sent a sample to the institute to be sequenced.

Housed in a low brick building in Walnut Creek, California, the Joint Genome Institute is sequencing the genes of hundreds of plants and microbes that might be useful for energy production and environmental cleanup; it is a key part of the Bioenergy Research Centers. Originally formed as part of the Human Genome Project in the late 1990s, the institute has its roots in the Department of Energy's decades-long interest in tracking genetic mutations in atomic-bomb survivors and nuclear workers. The scale of its current mission becomes evident as soon as you enter the lobby, where a TV screen displays a ticker that tallies sequences by the minute, day, month, and year. When I arrived at about 10 o'clock one morning last spring, the day's total stood at 25,555,288 DNA base pairs, the twinned nucleotides that are the building blocks of genes. Every second, another thousand base pairs joined the tally. Employees call this incessant data stream the "fire hose." The institute now sequences as much DNA in an hour as it did in all of 1998, and the pace is planned to double by the end of the year.

Even for people accustomed to avalanches of data, the effort to map the contents of the termite's third gut is extraordinary. "A disgusting mess of a data set," says Phil Hugenholtz, the head of the institute's Microbial Ecology Program. An angular Australian in his 40s, he speaks in rapid bursts, like a human fire hose. Traditional genomic analysis sequences one organism at a time, but Hugenholtz is a leading practitioner of metagenomics—the new science of sequencing genes from whole environments of microbes at once, and sorting out the resulting jumble of loose DNA code with the aid of computer science, statistics, and biochemistry. Metagenomics is not only breathtakingly fast; it allows us to catalog genes that were previously unknowable because so few types of microorganisms—fewer than 1 percent of all species of bacteria—can be cultured in a lab. Many biologists regard metagenomics as a scientific revolution akin to the invention of the microscope. In practice, though, it's a sloppy art.

When the sequencers finished, they had 71 million letters of DNA code in tiny fragments. They sorted the fragments, assembled them into longer chains of genes, and scanned the genes to determine their likely functions and which of the 300 microbes they might have come from. Scientists then looked for combinations of chemicals that might be enzymes, comparing the results to enzymes known to work on cellulose. The metagenomic picture of the termite's third gut that has so far emerged is a portrait of codes and probabilities—more sophisticated than a photograph from an electron microscope, but less satisfying, because so much remains indefinite.

Next, the scientists set about the long process of figuring out how all the parts work. "It's like trying to learn about a house when someone's given you nothing but the blueprints—and they're all ripped up," Hugenholtz says. Still, the blueprints were stunning. The termite gut contained much more than enzymes involved in breaking down wood into sugars: for example, there were a hundred species of spirochetes closely related to syphilis but here devoted to, among other things, producing hydrogen. There were also 482 appearances of a mysterious giant protein that Warnecke says looks like the international space station. He drew me a picture of a long, Lego-like scaffold with different enzymes plugged into it, hypothesizing that the protein might help strip sugars out of wood. But that was

only a guess: "One of the disadvantages of finding so much is that you don't know what it all means," he told me.

Hugenholtz and Warnecke began sifting through the questions raised by the metagenome. Why do termites have 300 microbes and 500 different genes to degrade cellulose? How do you go about deciding which microbe is the most important? Do some termite species have stronger guts than others? And what on Earth was the space station doing? To tackle these questions, they needed more termites. They took some from cow patties on a Texas farm, surprising the elderly landowners by asking for a signed waiver on whatever intellectual property might develop.

One afternoon I watched Warnecke dissect 50 of the new termites. He worked at a rapid clip, pulling the insects' heads and anuses in opposite directions with a microscopically violent yank; each termite's gut unwound into a short, lumpy string. He showed me an electron-micrograph image of the inside of the gut. It looked like an undulating carpet. On it were rod-shaped bacteria; Warnecke pointed out pimple-like structures on the sides of a few, which he thought might be the space-station-like giant proteins. He speculated that the proteins work something like a Swiss Army knife, holding an array of tool-like enzymes and catalysts outside the cell to grab pieces of wood and whittle away, allowing the cell to slurp up the sugars thus released. If this hypothesis is correct, the proteins could be a great fit for biofuel production, because those loose sugars could be fermented into ethanol.

But the magnified images were far from conclusive. Hugenholtz slumped in front of the screen and complained that he saw no wood in the gut—were the termites starving? He impatiently made a list of tests he wanted done. Hugenholtz is confident that the team will eventually figure out what the proteins do. "You really see the science flailing around blindly here—but then things crystallize out of the darkness," he told me.

One morning when I met Hugenholtz and Warnecke at a coffee shop, they began to riff on how the gut might work. "You get the feeling the microorganisms are more dominant than the termite. They must have a way to control the insect," Warnecke

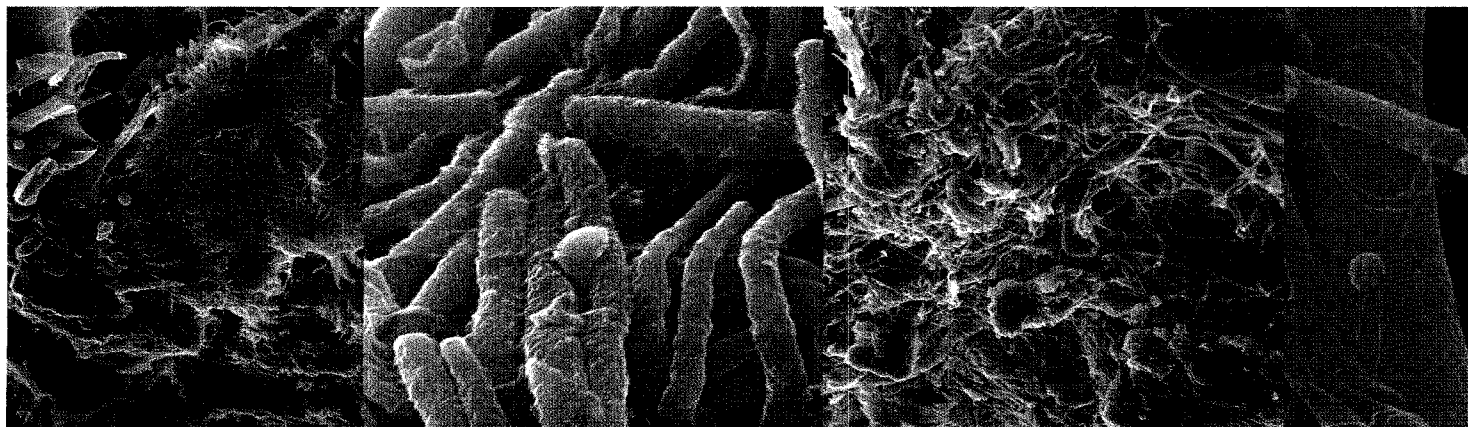
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For a multimedia look at the world of termites, narrated by Lisa Margonelli, visit www.theatlantic.com/termites.

said. Hugenholtz interrupted, quoting a colleague: "Maybe the termite is just a fancy delivery system for the creatures in the gut." We tend to assume that the larger organism in a symbiotic relationship is in charge, but relationships like the one between the termite and the microbes involve constant two-way chemical communications. Even human beings, Hugenholtz said, are subconsciously eavesdropping on chemical conversations between the inhabitants of our guts; this leads us to crave, say, potato chips when our microbes want salt. His eyes fell warily on his coffee. "Do you think our stomach bacteria have trained us?"

History suggests that science follows its own timetable, often producing results long after the politicians who approved the funding have left office. Yet curiosity without the prospect of imminent practical application is something biotech investors are increasingly loath to pay for. When the *Nature* study began, Diversa was on the cutting edge of "ethical

enzyme the fragments were programmed to make. They then tested those enzymes on cellulose, to see if they would attack it. Only the winners made it to sequencing. You might think of the Joint Genome Institute as a group of diligent librarians, studying every step along the way. In contrast, a Verenium senior researcher told me, the company takes a "Julia Child approach"—once it has thrown together the ingredients (like termite guts and cellulose), it turns its attention to the final product, with far less focus on the stages in between.

Much of the action takes place in a machine—a type of robot, really—called the GigaMatrix. Clad in steel, the GigaMatrix looks like a copier from the late 1980s, with two flat TV monitors on top and a door on the side. It can screen up to a million enzymes at a go, easily exceeding in a single day the lifetime performance of a human lab tech. The GigaMatrix and other machines took the 500 or so most interesting enzymes from the termite gut and narrowed them down to fewer than 100 with potentially practical applications. Those were then tested for



A MOLECULAR WRECKING YARD: Electron-micrograph images of the termite's third gut, where food is turned into fuel

bioprospecting"—searching the world for novel environments and enzymes. After merging with a biofuels company, it became Verenium last year, and shifted to the more prosaic task of making commercial enzymes involved in the development of products including animal feed, paper, and fuels.

David Weiner, the assistant director of enzyme technology at Verenium, gave me a tour of the labs, showing me what he calls the "giant funnel"—the process the company uses to sift through nature's intellectual property for enzymes that can be converted to profits. "We're not really interested in DNA," he said, meaning that the focus is on an enzyme's performance, not its origins.

Whereas the Joint Genome Institute began by sequencing the termite-gut DNA—learning about its underlying structure—and only then tried to identify what might be useful, Weiner's colleagues threw all the material from the Costa Rican expedition directly into testing, using the funnel approach to separate the most-useful enzymes from the millions of useless ones. Researchers inserted gene fragments into lab bacteria that had been genetically "tamed" to produce whatever

their effects on cellulose, modified, and inserted into "factory" bacteria trained to produce large quantities of enzymes while dining on cheap food, such as corn syrup. As the enzymes made their way through the process, every parameter of their growth and efficacy was measured. Only a small percentage proved powerful enough to merit continued investigation; these were stirred into multiple-enzyme "cocktails" to evaluate their speed and efficiency in combination. By the end, Weiner said, just a few enzymes remained in the running for further testing.

Geoff Hazlewood, a former senior vice president and now a consultant to Verenium, told me that the company has currently put aside studying termites for biofuels and has moved on to other potentially lucrative efforts. "You could screen ad nauseam," he said, "but you can't commit an infinite amount of resources." Whatever the termites are doing may be too complicated and fragile to be useful in a large industrial process. There may be genius in the termite gut—Weiner calls it, admirably, "a whole town"—but the wonders of symbiosis, in themselves, mean little to companies focused on the bottom line. "We want faster, cheaper, more efficient," Weiner told me.

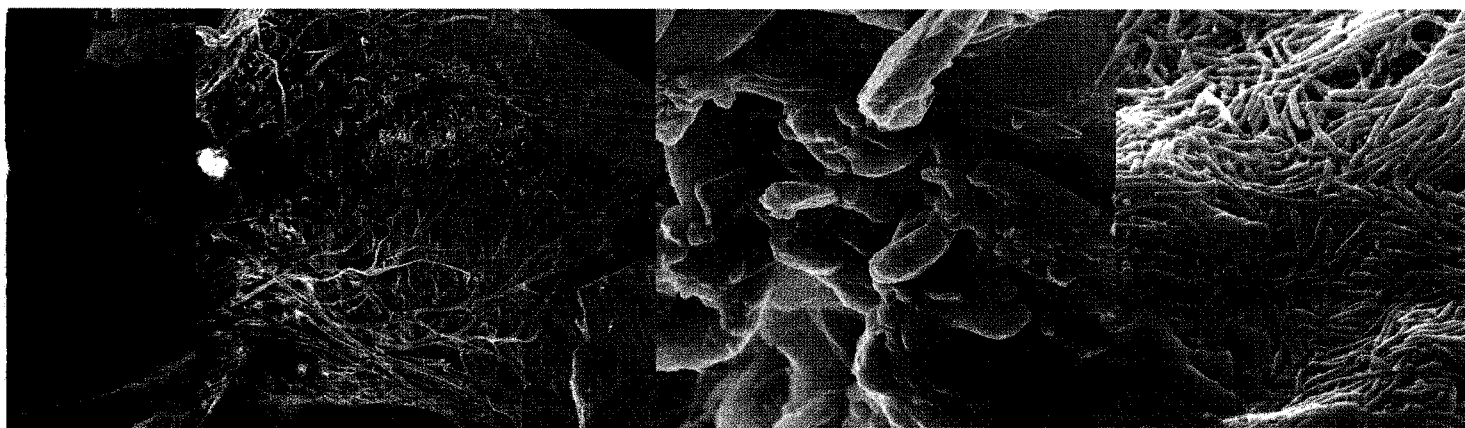
FAIK WARNECKE, PHIL HUGENHOLTZ, DOE JOINT GENOME INSTITUTE; MANIFRED AUER, UC BERKELEY AND LAWRENCE BERKELEY NATIONAL LABORATORY

And it's too early to tell whether the termite will *ever* provide genes or information that will enable biofuel production. Termite research could instead provide a cautionary tale about the difficulties of replicating nature on a political schedule. It may be faster and easier to come up with a comprehensive energy policy—investing in energy efficiency, changing personal behavior, and working with other large oil consumers to control prices—than to create a cellulose economy out of the termite gut.

Termites certainly have their critics. One is Harvey Blanch, a professor of chemical engineering at UC Berkeley and the chief science and technology officer at the Department of Energy's Joint Bio-Energy Institute, in Emeryville, California (where Hugenholtz also conducts research). "Those microbes eat pâté!" Blanch said. By the time wood reaches the termite's third gut, he explained, it has been chewed to a fine consistency and soaked in the highly alkaline second stomach; the gut microbes don't have to work very hard to break it down. Pre-

cautions that the retail price could be \$6 or \$8 a gallon if the cost of the raw materials rises, and he thinks a realistic deadline is at least 10 years away. Perhaps because of his earlier experiences, he fears that projects that fail to deliver quickly are at risk, which puts a lot of pressure on both the Bioenergy Research Centers and individual researchers.

These concerns speak to an important tension underlying the termite research: the often competing agendas of work aimed at producing quick results, and of the slower, more methodical approach known as basic science, which tries to discover the fundamental logic of natural processes. Again, Julia Child (or maybe the more commercial Wolfgang Puck) versus the librarians. Some of the scientists—and even venture capitalists—I spoke with voiced fears that the race to harness nature for fuel production may cause us to neglect basic science and thus jeopardize potential long-term gains.



treating wood in similar ways on an industrial scale would be ridiculously expensive, he believes. He thinks the termite has been overhyped, and sees this as a reflection of unrealistically high hopes for quick, painless replacements for gasoline.

Blanch has experienced the pitfalls of research driven by political goals. In the early 1970s, he worked on creating faux meat products from petroleum, which was then thought to be a cheap way to feed the world. For example, single-celled "chicken" proteins were produced by yeasts that fed on oil by-products, and then draped around plastic bones. But when the 1973 oil crisis hit, the cost of the raw material soared, effectively ending the petroprotein business. Blanch then shifted to cellulosic ethanol; the project was progressing until President Reagan killed it, in the mid-1980s. Now, he's at once hopeful that we will one day be able to engineer novel organisms and make better fuels, and wary of putting too much faith in quick technological solutions. "Given the scale at which we need to operate, it's hard to imagine any magic organism that will do the trick," he told me.

Several years ago, government labs set a goal of producing cellulosic ethanol for \$1.33 a gallon by 2012, but Blanch

Consider this: half of the 80,000 genes inventoried from the Costa Rican termites remain unidentified, and each of those 40,000, Warnecke imagines, could require a Ph.D. thesis to figure out. Hugenholtz says that metagenomics is grappling with the problem of having too much information and too few references. "Sequencing is far outstripping our ability to characterize the genes," he explains, adding that this can lead to "genome rot"—a chain of errors created when one scientist gets a gene wrong, and then the mistake is multiplied across other genomes. The popular model of science is based on "eureka" moments, but right now, metagenomics is more like a big 3-D puzzle, where every new piece of knowledge—and every mistake—affects the whole. Trying to solve just one part of the puzzle for a quick commercial breakthrough may be as tricky as solving the entire thing.

It could also cause us to give short shrift to alternative solutions. Eric Mathur was one of the Diversa executives who helped set up the Costa Rican expedition; he now works for Synthetic Genomics, a company founded by the scientific impresario Craig Venter to search for biology-based fuels and methods to cut greenhouse-gas emissions. Mathur says the *Nature* paper is just

the beginning of a long process of understanding how symbiotic creatures deal with wood and carbon. He thinks that searching for individual enzymes in the termite will be a dead end, but that harnessing the power of whole environments might yield results. The challenge, he says, is to learn how these environments' overall metabolisms work, and then use the tools of synthetic biology to engineer the organisms in them to evolve—creating a “slave organism” that focuses all of its resources, down to its last electron, on processing carbon. “Metabolic engineering is a very powerful method for productivity,” he told me.

But the strongest argument for more basic research may be the termite itself. Jared Leadbetter, an associate professor of environmental microbiology at Caltech, remembers feeling “like an ecotourist in *Alice in Wonderland*” the first time he looked at a magnified termite gut, 18 years ago. Leadbetter has pioneered the study of the metabolism of a few of the spirochetes in the gut. Like Mathur, he believes scientists might put the termite's gut to work against global warming by using it to understand and possibly alter the carbon cycle—the biogeochemical give-and-take of greenhouse gases between the Earth and its atmosphere.

Leadbetter says one of the extraordinary things about termites is not how much ethanol they might make, but how little methane they produce. Cows lose 20 percent of the energy in the grass they eat, because the microbes in their stomachs combine hydrogen and carbon dioxide from the grass to make methane, a greenhouse gas that traps 20 times as much heat in the atmosphere as CO₂. In 2006, the greenhouse gases produced by U.S. farm animals exceeded the emissions of the iron, steel, and

cement industries combined. Termites lose less than 2 percent of their nutrients to methane production, because the spirochetes in their guts transform hydrogen and carbon dioxide into acetate, which the termites use as fuel. If we understood this process, perhaps we could put new microorganisms into the stomachs of cows and reduce their production of methane.

We're a long way from changing the chemistry of cows' stomachs, but the process of adapting and commercializing the termite's role in the carbon cycle has already yielded success on a small scale. The Virginia-based company ArcTech trained termites to eat coal, and then rummaged through their guts to find the microorganisms best at turning coal into methane. It cultured those microorganisms and now feeds them coal; the company plans to use the methane they produce to make electricity, and is already selling the by-products, including one used by farmers as a soil additive. ArcTech says this method eliminates virtually all greenhouse-gas emissions from coal-based electricity production. Other companies are trying to engineer similar organisms that could be sent into abandoned mines and oil wells to scavenge fuel that goes unused because it is so hard to get at. Such efforts could have a dramatic effect on both the environment and geopolitics: experts estimate that increasing the yield of oil wells from the current average of 35 percent of the oil in a reservoir to 40 percent would be the equivalent of discovering a new Saudi Arabia.

Who knows what other answers may lurk in the termite? Elizabeth Ottesen, a graduate student doing research in Leadbetter's lab, dissected a termite and put it under a microscope to give me a tour of its gut. At first glance, the dark mass of the gut was immobile, the organisms apparently packed too tightly to move, but as Ottesen added water, a menagerie of blobby *Trichonympha*, whizzing spirochetes, and other creatures materialized, all supported by gangs of bacteria too small to see. The inhabitants here are arranged in hierarchies more elaborate than Manhattan real estate, she said: Those at the edges use oxygen, while those in the middle are anaerobes. Many are high-speed commuters, outfitted with complicated sensing and swimming apparatus that helps them find hydrogen and other gases. Among the creatures in the termite's gut, and especially among those creatures' genes, exist redundancies that suggest the system has been overengineered to survive the worst (including being force-fed coal). A spirochete's flagella, for example, are between the layers of a double skin, enabling the organism to drill through the most viscous environments.

Leadbetter expects it will take at least 25 years to unravel what he calls the “teleological questions” about the termite's complexity. Along the way, the termite will likely provide clues to solving climate change, but Leadbetter thinks its greatest value may be as a repository of biological wisdom gathered over the course of more than 100 million years of survival on Earth. “When you look at a termite and its gut,” he says, “you're looking at a long line of winners.” ■

QUAI AUX FLEURS

I want to just keep on smearing butter
& jam on toast with a blunt knife
and licking foam from my espresso cup,
while listening to Lizzy and Tricia practice French,
but I'm a realist. Even the songbirds have levels
of mercury in their blood and feathers. Somewhere,
in the brightness against a wall, a soldier crouches—
sand in his hair, juices dripping from his body.
Here there is joy, like a hole with greenness coming
out of it, but there night pushes against the cylinder
of his gun. He probably has a knife too, in the presence
of the incomprehensible, thrusting his belly
to the ground, feeling the strangeness throb in his blood
as he touches the scope to his cheek.

—HENRI COLE

Henri Cole is the author of six collections of poetry, including *Blackbird and Wolf* (2007). He teaches at Ohio State University.

Lisa Margonelli is an Irvine Fellow at the New America Foundation and the author of *Oil on the Brain: Petroleum's Long, Strange Trip to Your Tank* (2007).



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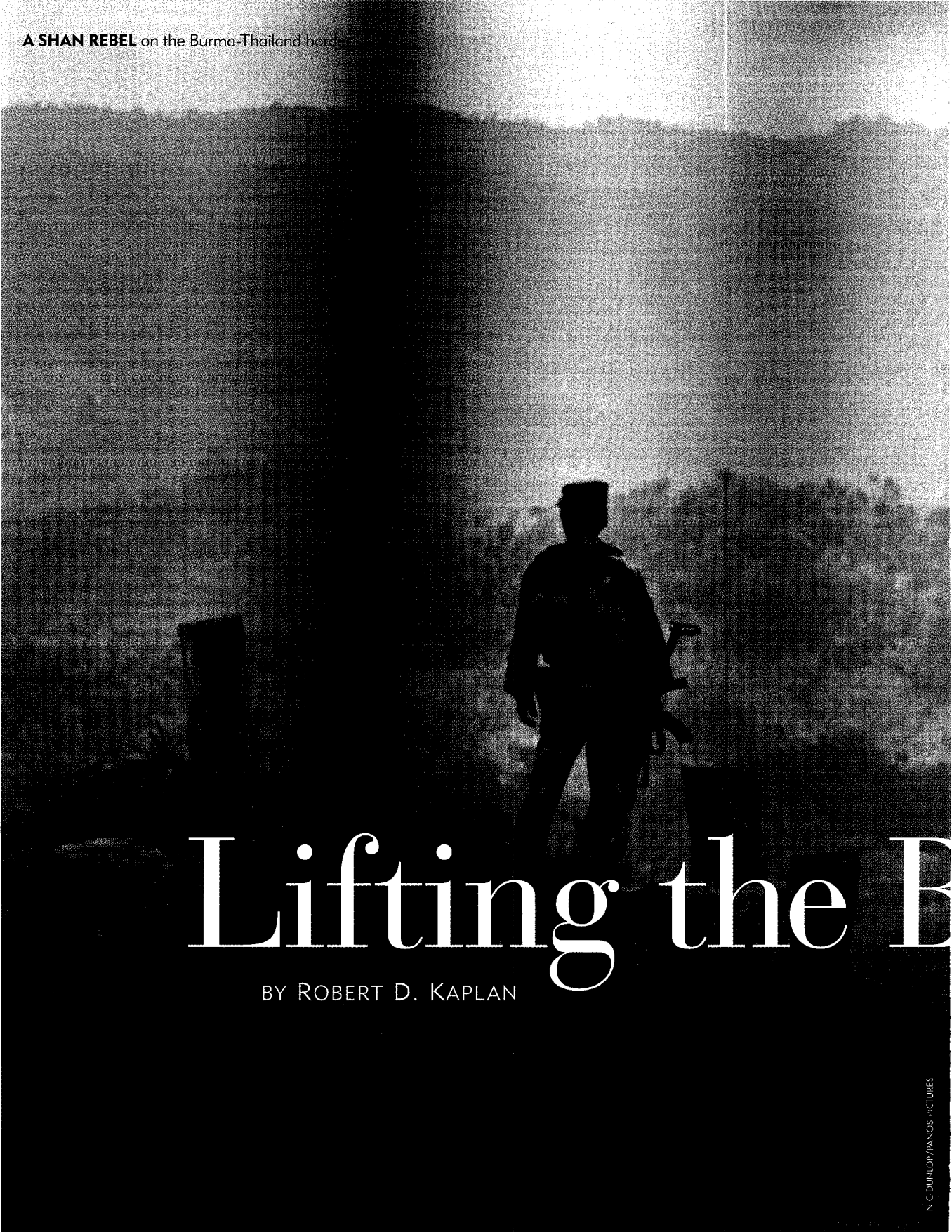
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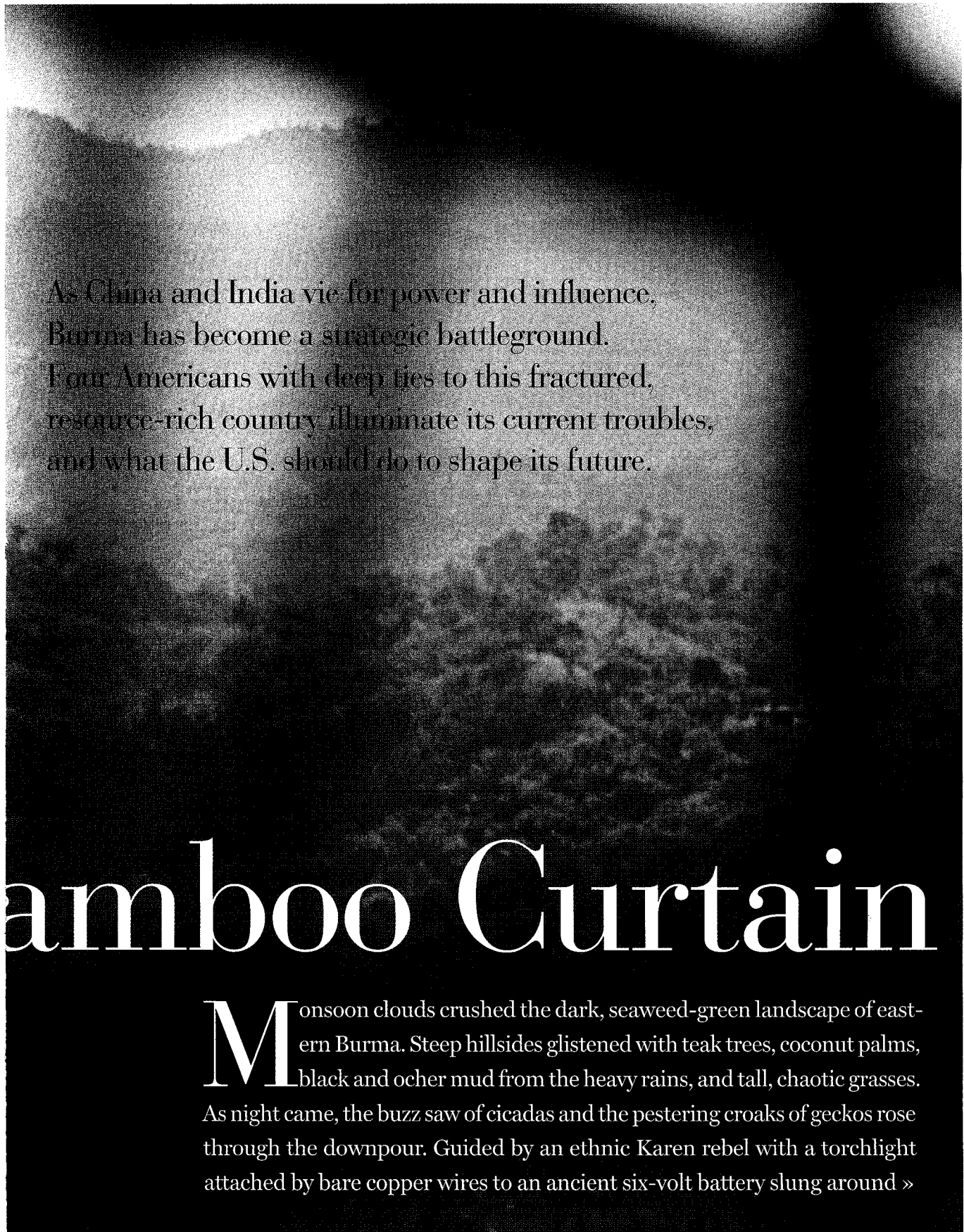
A SHAN REBEL on the Burma-Thailand border



Lifting the B

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

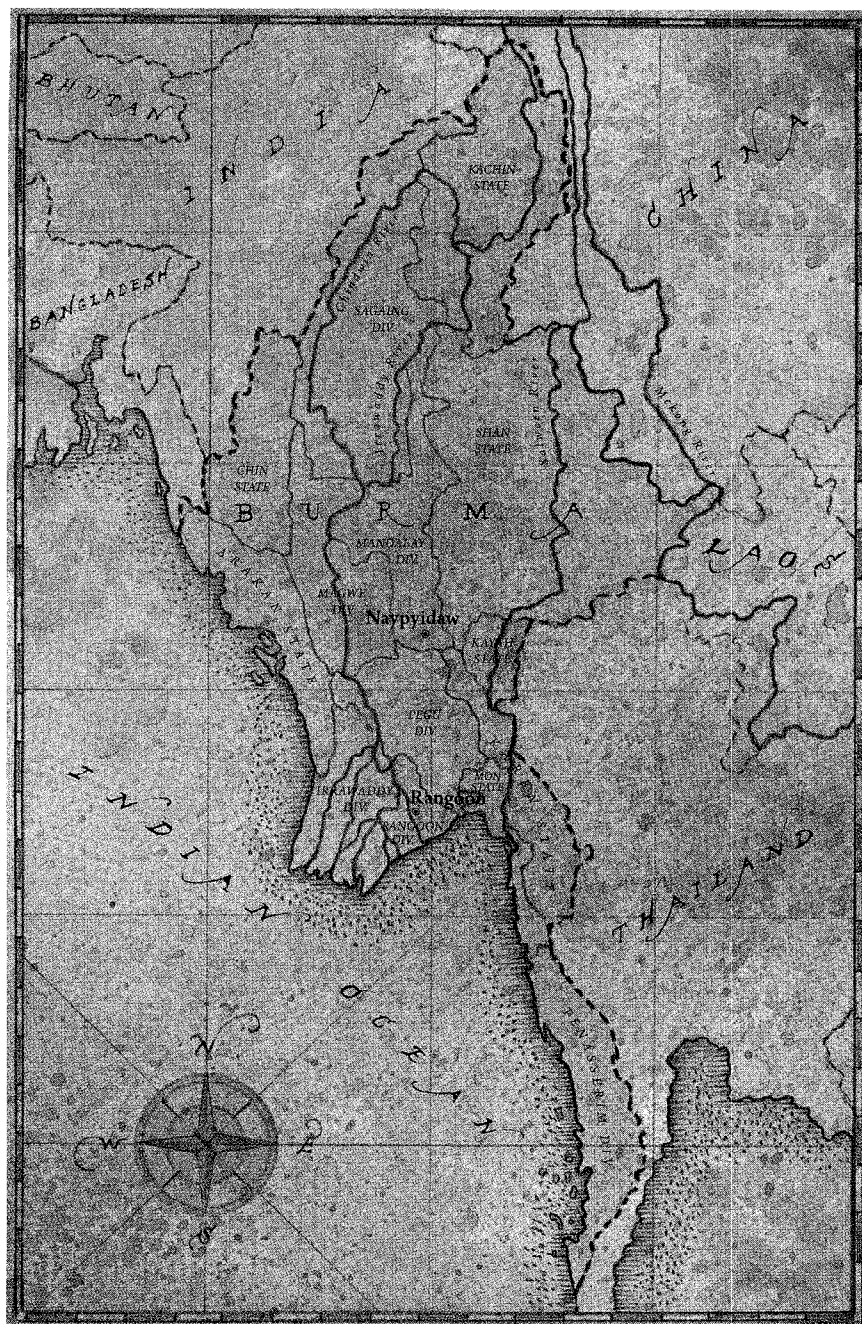
NIC DUNLOP/PANOS PICTURES



As China and India vie for power and influence, Burma has become a strategic battleground. Four Americans with deep ties to this fractured, resource-rich country illuminate its current troubles, and what the U.S. should do to shape its future.

amboo Curtain

Monsoon clouds crushed the dark, seaweed-green landscape of eastern Burma. Steep hillsides glistened with teak trees, coconut palms, black and ocher mud from the heavy rains, and tall, chaotic grasses. As night came, the buzz saw of cicadas and the pestering croaks of geckos rose through the downpour. Guided by an ethnic Karen rebel with a torchlight attached by bare copper wires to an ancient six-volt battery slung around »



his neck, I stumbled across three bamboo planks over a fast-moving stream from Thailand into Burma. Any danger came less from Burmese government troops than from those of its democratic neighbor, whose commercial interests have made it a close friend of Burma's military regime. Said Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej recently: the ruling Burmese generals are "good Buddhists" who like to meditate, and Burma is a country that "lives in peace." The Thai military has been on the lookout for Karen soldiers, who have been fighting the Burmese government since 1948.

"It ended in Vietnam, in Cambodia. When will it end in Burma?" asked Saw Roe Key, a Karen I met shortly after I crossed the border. He had lost a leg to a Toe Popper anti-

personnel mine—the kind that the regime has littered throughout the hills that are home to more than a half-dozen ethnic groups in some stage of revolt. Of the two dozen or so Karens I encountered at an outpost inside Burma, four were missing a leg from a mine. Some wore green camouflage fatigues and were armed with M-16s and AK-47s; most were in T-shirts and traditional skirts, or *longyis*. Built into a hillside under the forest canopy, the camp was a jumble of wooden-plank huts on stilts roofed with dried teak leaves, with a solar panel and an ingenious water system. Beyond the camp beckoned perfect guerrilla country.

Sawbawh Pah, 50, small and stocky with only a tuft of hair on his scalp, runs a clinic here for wounded soldiers and people uprooted from their homes, of whom there have been 1.5 million in Burma. The Burmese junta, known as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), has razed more than 3,000 villages in Karen state alone—one reason *The Washington Post* has called Burma a "slow-motion Darfur." With a simple, resigned expression that some might mistake for a smile, he told me, "My father was killed by the SPDC. My uncle was killed by the SPDC. My cousin was killed by the SPDC. They shot my uncle in the head and cut off his leg while he was looking for food after the village was destroyed." Over a meal of fried noodles and eggs, I was inundated with life stories like Pah's. Their power lay in their grueling repetition.

Major Kea Htoo, the commander of the local battalion of Karen guerrillas, had reddened lips and a swollen left cheek from chewing betel nut. Like his comrades, he told me he saw no end to the war. They were fighting not for a better regime composed of more enlightened military officers, nor for a democratic government that would likely be led by ethnic Burmans like Aung San Suu Kyi, but for Karen independence. Tu Lu, missing a leg, had been in the Karen army for 20 years. Kyi Aung, the oldest at 55, had been fighting for 34 years. These guerrillas are paid no salaries. They receive only food and basic medicine. Their lives have been condensed to the seemingly unrealistic goal of independence; since Burma first fell under military misrule in 1962, nobody has ever offered them anything resembling a compromise. Although the junta has trapped the Karens,

Shans, and other ethnics into small redoubts, its corrupt and desertion-plagued military lacks the strength for the final kill. So the war continues.

Endless conflict and gross, regime-inflicted poverty have kept Burma primitive enough to maintain an aura of romance. Like Tibet and Darfur, it offers its advocates in the post-industrial West a cause with both moral urgency and aesthetic appeal. In 1952, the British writer Norman Lewis published *Golden Earth*, a spare and haunting masterpiece about his travels throughout Burma. The insurrections of the Karens, Shans, and other hill tribes make the author's peregrinations dangerous, and therefore even more uncomfortable. He found that only a small region in the north, inhabited largely by the Kachin tribe, was "completely free from bandits or insurgent armies." Lewis spends a night tormented by rats, cockroaches, and a scorpion, yet wakes none the worse in the morning to the "mighty whirring of hornbills flying overhead." His bodily sufferings seem a small price to pay for the uncanny beauty of a country of broken roads and no adequate hotels, where "the condition of the soul replaces that of the stock markets as a topic for polite conversation." More than 50 years later, what shocks about this book is how contemporary it seems. A Western relief worker arriving in the wake of last spring's devastating cyclone could have followed Lewis's itinerary and had similar experiences. By contrast, think of all the places where globalization has made even a 10-year-old travel guide out of date.

But Burma is more than a place to feel sorry for. And its ethnic struggles are of more than obscurantist interest. For one thing, they precipitated the military coup that toppled the country's last civilian government almost a half century ago, when General Ne Win took power in part to forestall ethnic demands for greater autonomy. With one-third of Burma's population composed of ethnic minorities living in its fissiparous borderlands (which account for seven of Burma's 14 states and divisions), the demands of the Karens and others will return to the fore once the military regime collapses. Democracy will not deliver Burma from being a cobbled-together mini-empire of nationalities, even if it does open the door to compromise among them.

Moreover, Burma's hill tribes form part of a new and larger geopolitical canvas. Burma fronts on the Indian Ocean, by way of the Bay of Bengal. Its neighbors India and China (not to mention Thailand) covet its abundant oil, natural gas, uranium, coal, zinc, copper, precious stones, timber, and hydropower. China especially needs a cooperative, if not supine, Burma for the construction of deepwater ports, highways, and energy pipelines that can open China's landlocked south and west to the sea, enabling its ever-burgeoning middle class to receive speedier deliveries of oil from the Persian Gulf. These routes must pass north from the Indian Ocean through the very territories wracked by Burma's ethnic insurrections.

Burma is a prize to be contested, and China and India are not-so-subtly vying for it. But in a world shaped by ethnic struggles, higher fuel prices, new energy pathways, and

climate-change-driven natural disasters like the recent cyclone, Burma also represents a microcosm of the strategic challenges that the United States will face. The U.S. Navy underscored these factors in its new maritime strategy, released in late 2007, which indicated that the Navy will shift its attention from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean and the western Pacific. The Marines, too, in their new "Vision and Strategy 2025" statement, highlight the Indian Ocean as among their main theaters of activity in coming years.

But toward Burma specifically, U.S. policy seems guided more by strategic myopia. The Bush administration, like its predecessors, has loudly embraced the cause of Burmese democracy but has done too little to advance it, either by driving diplomatic initiatives in the region or by supporting any of the ethnic insurgencies. Indeed, Special Operations Command is too preoccupied with the western half of the Indian Ocean, the Arab/Persian half, to pay much attention to Burma, which lacks the energizing specter of an Islamic terror threat. Meanwhile, the administration's reliance on sanctions and its unwillingness to engage with the ruling junta has left the field open to China, India, and other countries swayed more by commercial than moral concerns.

But some Americans are consumed by Burma, and they offer a window onto different, and perhaps more fruitful, ways of engaging with its complex realities. I saw Burma through the eyes of four such men. In most cases, I cannot identify them by name, either because of the tenuousness of their position in neighboring Thailand, whose government is not friendly to their presence, or because of the sensitivity of what they do and whom they work for. Their expertise illustrates what it takes to make headway in Burma, while their goals say a great deal about what is at stake.

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THE SON OF THE BLUE-EYED SHAN

While the mess in Iraq has made the virtues of cultural expertise newly fashionable, champions of such experience often conveniently forget that many of America's greatest area experts have been Christian missionaries. American history has seen two strains of missionary area experts: the old Arab hands and the Asia, or China, hands. The Arab hands were Protestant missionaries who in the early 19th century traveled to Lebanon and ended up founding what became the American University of Beirut. From their lineage descended the State Department Arabists of the Cold War era. The Asia hands have a similarly distinguished origin, beginning, too, in the 19th century and providing the U.S. government with much of its area expertise through the early Cold War, when, during the McCarthy era, a number of them were unjustly purged. One American who counseled me on Burma is descended from several generations of Baptist missionaries from the Midwest who ministered to the hill tribes beginning

in the late 19th century. His father, known as “The Blue-Eyed Shan,” escaped Burma ahead of the invading Japanese and was conscripted into Britain’s Indian army, in which he commanded a Shan battalion. Among my acquaintance’s earliest childhood memories was the sight of Punjabi soldiers ordering work gangs of Japanese prisoners of war to pick up rubble in the Burmese capital of Rangoon. With no formal education, he speaks Shan, Burmese, Hindi, Thai, and the Yunnan and Mandarin dialects of Chinese. He has spent his life studying Burma, though the 1960s saw him elsewhere in Indochina, aiding America’s effort in Vietnam.

During our conversation, he sat erect and cross-legged on a raised platform, wearing a *longyi*. Gray-haired, with a sculpted face and an authoritative, courtly Fred Thompson voice, he has the bearing of an elder statesman, tempered by a certain gentleness. “Chinese intelligence is beginning to operate with the antiregime Burmese ethnic hill tribes,” he told me. “The Chinese want the dictatorship in Burma to remain, but being pragmatic, they also have alternative plans for the country. The warning that comes from senior Chinese intelligence officers to the Karens, the Shans, and other ethnics is to ‘come to us for help—not the Americans—since we are next door and will never leave the area.’”

At the same time, he explained, the Chinese are reaching out to young military officers in Thailand. In recent years, the Thai royal family and the Thai military—particularly the special forces and cavalry—have been sympathetic to the hill tribes fighting the pro-Chinese military junta; Thailand’s civilian politicians, influenced by lobbies wanting to do business with resource-rich Burma, have been the junta’s best allies. In sum, democracy in Thailand is momentarily the enemy of democracy in Burma.

But the Chinese, the Son of the Blue-Eyed Shan implied, are still not satisfied: they want *both* Thailand’s democrats and military officers on their side, even as they work with *both* Burma’s junta and its ethnic opponents. “A new bamboo curtain may be coming down on Southeast Asia,” he worried. This would not be a hard-and-fast wall like the Iron Curtain; nor would it be part of some newly imagined Asian domino theory. Rather, it would create a zone of Chinese political and economic influence fostered by, among other factors, American neglect. While the Chinese operate at every level in Burma and Thailand, top Bush-administration officials have skipped summits of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. My friend simply wanted the United States back in the game.

“To topple the regime in Burma,” he says, “the ethnics need a full-time advisory capability, not in-and-out soldiers of fortune. This would include a coordination center inside Thailand. There needs to be a platform for all the disaffected officers in the Burmese military to defect to.” Again, rather than a return to the early Vietnam era, he was talking about a more subtle, more clandestine version of the support the United States provided the Afghan mujahideen during the 1980s. The current Thai administration would be hostile to that, but the

government in Bangkok, and its policies, routinely changes. The military could yet return to power there, and even if it doesn’t, if the U.S. signaled its intent to support the Burmese hill tribes against a regime hated the world over, the Thai security apparatus would find a way to assist.

“The Shans and the Kachins near the Chinese border,” my friend went on, “have gotten a raw deal from the Burmese junta, but they are also nervous about a dominant China. They feel squeezed. And unity for the hill tribes of Burma is almost impossible. Somebody from the outside must provide a mechanism upon which they can all depend.” Larger than England and France combined, Burma has historically been a crazy quilt of vaguely demarcated states sectioned by jungly mountain ranges and the valleys of the Irrawaddy, Chindwin, Salween, and Mekong rivers. As a result, its various peoples remain distinct: the Chins in western Burma, for example, have almost nothing in common with the Karens in eastern Burma. Nor is there any community of language or culture between the Shans and the Burmans (the ethnic group, not the nationality, which is Burmese), save their Buddhist religion. Indeed, the Shans have much more in common with the Thais across the border.

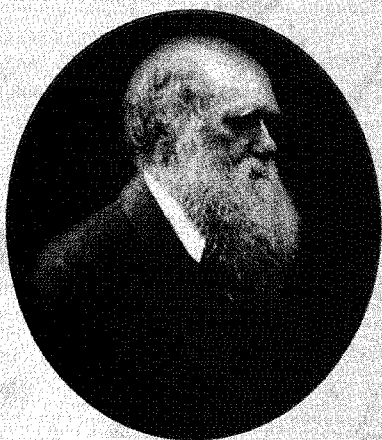
But Burma should not be confused with the Balkans, or with Iraq, where ethnic and sectarian differences simmering for decades under a carapace of authoritarianism erupted once central authority dissolved. After so many years of violence, war fatigue has set in here, and the tribes show little propensity to fight each other after the regime unravels. They are more disunited than they are at odds. Even among themselves, the Shans, as my friend told me, have been historically subdivided into states led by minor kings. As he sees it, such divisions open a quiet organizing opportunity for Americans of his ilk.

THE FATHER OF THE WHITE MONKEY

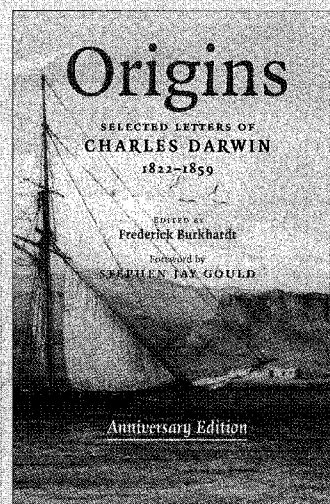
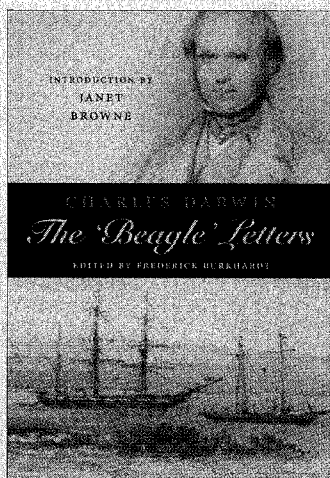
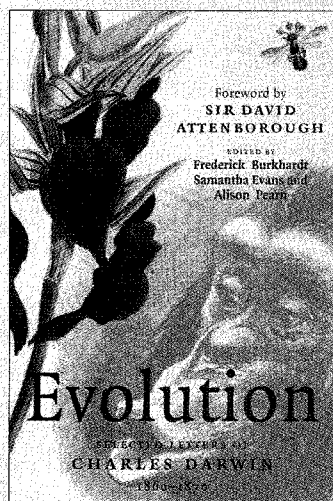
Tha-U-Wa-A-Pa, or “The Father of the White Monkey” in Burmese, is also the son of Christian missionaries, originally from Texas. Except for nine years in the U.S. Army, including in Special Forces, from which he retired as a major, he has been, like his parents, a missionary in one form or another. He also speaks a number of the local languages. He is much younger than my other acquaintance and much more animated, with a rosy, muscular body in perpetual motion, as if his system were running on too many candy bars. Whereas my other contact has focused on the Shan tribes near the Chinese border, the Father of the White Monkey—the sobriquet comes from the nickname he has given his daughter, who often travels with him—works mostly with the Karen and other tribes in eastern Burma abutting Thailand, though the networks he operates have ranged as far as the Indian border.

In 1996, he met the Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon, while she was briefly not under house arrest. The meeting inspired him to initiate a “day of prayer” for Burma, and to work for its ethnic unity. During the 1997 Burmese army offensive that displaced more than 100,000 people, he was deep inside the country, alone, going from one burned-out village to

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another, handing out medicine from his backpack. He told me about this and other army offensives that he witnessed, in which churches were torched, children disemboweled, and whole families killed. "These stories don't make me numb," he said, his eyes popping open, facial muscles stretched. "Each is like the first one. I pray always that justice will come and be done."

In 1997, after that trip inside Burma, he started the Free Burma Rangers, a relief group that has launched more than 300 humanitarian missions and has 43 small medical teams among the Karens, Karenis, Shans, Chins, Kachins, and Arakanese—across the parts of highland Burma that embrace on three sides the central Irrawaddy River valley, home to the majority Burmans. As he told it, the Free Burma Rangers is an unusual nongovernmental organization. "We stand with the villagers; we're not above them. If they don't run from the government troops, we don't either. We have a medic, a photographer, and a reporter/intel guy in each team that marks the GPS positions of Burmese government troops, maps the camps, and takes pictures with a telephoto lens, all of which we post on our Web site. We deal with the Pentagon, with human-rights

cancer, in which the regime is working to dominate, control, and radically assimilate all the ethnic peoples of the country." I was reminded of what Jack Dunford, the executive director of the Thailand Burma Border Consortium, had told me in Bangkok. The military regime was "relentless, building dams, roads, and huge agricultural projects, taking over mines, laying pipelines," sucking in cash from neighboring powers and foreign companies, selling off natural resources at below market value—all to entrench itself in power.

Once, not long ago, the Father of the White Monkey was sitting on a hillside at night, in an exposed location between the Burmese army and a cluster of internal refugees whom the army had driven from their homes. The Karen soldiers he was with had fired rocket-propelled grenades at the Burmese army position, and in response the Burmese soldiers began firing mortar rounds at him. At that moment, he got a message on his communications gear from a friend at the Pentagon asking why the United States should be interested in Burma.

He tapped back a slew of reasons that ranged from totalitarianism to the devastation of hardwood forests, from religious persecution of Buddhist monks to the use of prisoners as mine sweepers, and much else. But, ever the missionary, the Father of the White Monkey barely touched on strategic or regional-security issues. When I asked him his denomination, he responded, "I'm a Christian." As such, he believes he is doing God's work, engaged morally first and foremost, especially with the Karens, who number many Christians,

China especially needs a cooperative,
if not supine, Burma for the construction
of deepwater ports, highways, and energy
pipelines that can open China's
landlocked south and west to the sea.

groups ... There is a higher moral obligation to intervene on the side of good, since silence is a form of consent.

"NGOs," he went on in a racing voice, "like to claim that they are above politics. Not true. The very act of providing aid assists one side or another, however indirectly. NGOs take sides all the time." The Father of the White Monkey takes this hard truth several steps further. Whereas the Thais host Burmese refugee camps on their side of the border, and the ethnic insurgents run camps inside Burma for internally displaced people—even as the Karens and other ethnics have mobile clinics near Burmese army concentrations—the backpacking Free Burma Rangers operate *behind* enemy lines.

Like my other acquaintance, the Father of the White Monkey is a very evolved form of special operator. One might suspect that the Free Burma Rangers is on some government payroll in Washington. But the truth is more pathetic. "We are funded by church groups around the world. Our yearly budget is \$600,000. We were down to \$150 at one point; we all prayed and the next day got a grant for \$70,000. We work hand to mouth." For him, Burma is not a job but a lifelong obsession.

"Burma is not Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge," he told me. "It's not genocide. It's not a car wreck. It's a slow, creeping

converted by people like his parents. He is the kind of special operator the U.S. security bureaucracy can barely accept, for becoming one involves taking sides and going native to a degree. And yet, operatives like him offer the level of expertise that the United States desperately needs, if it is to have influence without being overbearing in remote parts of the globe.

THE COLONEL

Timothy Heinemann, a retired Army colonel from Laguna Beach, California, does think strategically. He is also a veteran of Special Forces. I first met him in 2002 at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where he was the dean of academics. He now runs Worldwide Impact, an NGO that helps ethnic groups, as well as a number of cross-border projects, particularly sending media teams into Burma to record the suffering there. Another kind of special operator, Heinemann, with his flip-flops and his engaging manner, embodies the subtle, indirect approach to managing conflict emphasized in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, one of the Pentagon's primary planning documents. Heinemann says that he "privatizes condition-setting." He explains: "We are networkers on both sides of the border.

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 where bring brief cement field brick **the** fence cone pole screech roll glide
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 winding nail warning head glow book wire string **right** meeting fence double
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 next vote **words** wheat impala tundra gray rack lure wild white basket bare
 rest clip fall walk gap button drop wet press smooth bee speaker percent the
 morning blue trash lunch **when** memorial never care remember relative
 together weep journey car pew stage speak lead tie bath push hide wall
 down announce trash leave number bucket coal crowd **your** lonely wrap
 music rug thumb fire arrow invite jewel line gather better feather right
 wrinkle **teen** ear mouse pass pipe drag leather snow indent wind tissue
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 tu-tu fish glare shiny nag **is** torn letter write year count bag felt time bytes
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We try to find opportunities for NGOs to collaborate better in supporting ethnic groups' needs. I do my small part to set conditions so that America can protect national, international, and humanitarian interests with real savvy. Our work is well known to various branches of the U.S. government. The opposition to the military dictatorship has no strategic and operational planning like Hezbollah does. Aung San Suu Kyi is little more than a symbol of the wrong issue—'Democracy first!' Ethnic rights and the balance of ethnic power are preconditions for democracy in Burma. These issues must be faced first, or little has been learned from the lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq." Heinemann, like the Father of the White Monkey, also lives hand to mouth, grabbing grants and donations from wherever he can, and is sometimes reduced to financing trips himself. He finds Burma "exotic, intoxicating."

Burma is also a potential North Korea, he says, as well as a perfect psychological operations target. He and others explained that the Russians are helping the Burmese government to mine uranium in the Kachin and Chin regions in the north and west, with the North Koreans waiting in the wings to supply nuclear technology. The Burmese junta craves some sort of weapons-of-mass-destruction capability to provide it with international leverage. "But the regime is paranoid," Heinemann points out. "It's superstitious. They're rolling chicken bones on the ground to see what to do next."

"Burma's got a 400,000-man army [the active-duty U.S. Army is 500,000] that's prone to mutiny," Heinemann went on. "Only the men at the very top are loyal. You could spread rumors, conduct information warfare. It might not take much to unravel it." (Burmese soldiers are reportedly getting only a portion of their salaries, and their weapons at major bases are locked up at night.) On the other hand, the military constitutes the country's most secure social-welfare system, and that buys a certain amount of loyalty from the troops. And yet, "there is no trust by the higher-ups of the lower ranks," according to a Karen resistance source. The junta leader, Than Shwe, a former postal clerk who has never been to the West, is known, along with his wife, to consult an astrologer. "He governs out of fear; he is not brave," notes Aung Zaw, editor of *The Irrawaddy*, a magazine run by Burmese exiles in the northwestern Thai city of Chiang Mai. "And Than Shwe rarely speaks publicly; he has even less charisma than Ne Win," the dictator from 1962 to 1988.

Heinemann and Aung Zaw each recounted to me how the regime suddenly deserted Rangoon one day in 2005 and moved the capital north, halfway to Mandalay, to Naypyidaw, "the abode of kings," which it built from scratch, with funds from Burma's natural-gas revenues. The date of the move was astrologically timed. The new capital lies deep in the forest and is fortified with underground bunkers designed to protect against an American invasion. Heinemann sees China, India, and other Asian nations jockeying for position with one of the world's worst, weirdest, wealthiest, and most strategically placed rogue regimes, which is vulnerable to a coup or even

disintegration, if only the United States adopted the kind of patient, low-key, and inexpensive approach that he and my other two acquaintances advocate.

Heinemann's last job in the military was as a planner for the occupation of Iraq, and he was an eyewitness to the mistakes of a massive military machine that disregarded local realities. He sees Burma as the inverse of Iraq, a place where the United States can do itself a lot of good, and do much good for others, if it fights smart.

THE BULL THAT SWIMS

And then there is Ta Doe Tee, or "The Bull That Swims," another American, whom I met in his suite in one of Bangkok's most expensive hotels. His impeccably tailored black suit barely masked an intimidating physique—the reason for his Burmese nickname—and his business card defines him as a "compradore," an all-purpose factotum steeped in local culture, the kind of enabler who was vital to the running of the British East India Company. The Bull was a staff sergeant in Special Forces in the 1970s and now works in the security business in Southeast Asia.

He is of the Army Special Forces generation that was frustrated about having just missed service in Vietnam, with little to do overseas during the presidency of Jimmy Carter. Stationed at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, in the mid-1970s, he was mentored, commanded, and led by some of the Son Tay Raiders. "Dick Meadows, Greg McGuire, Jack Joplin, Joe Lupyak"—he recites their names with reverence—were SFs who stormed the Son Tay prison camp near Hanoi in 1970 in a failed attempt to rescue American prisoners of war. "Vietnam and Southeast Asia were all they ever talked about," he told me.

But in 1978, Jimmy Carter's head of the CIA, Admiral Stansfield Turner, fired or forced into early retirement almost 200 officers running agents stationed abroad who had been providing intelligence, and many of them were in Southeast Asia. The CIA's clandestine service was devastated. As the Bull tells the story, many of the fired officers would not simply "be turned off," and decided to maintain self-supporting networks, "picking up kids" like himself along the way, just out of Special Forces. They sent him to learn to sail and fly, and he became a certified ship's master for cargo vessels and an FAA-certified pilot. In the 1980s, he became involved in operations in Southeast Asia, such as bringing equipment to the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. He blurred the line between such controversial and shadowy government operations and the illegal means sometimes used to sustain them: in 1988, while trying to bring 70 tons of marijuana to the West Coast of the United States with a Southeast Asian crew under his command, he was boarded by the U.S. Coast Guard. He served five years in prison in the U.S. and has been back in Southeast Asia ever since.

The Bull put on reading glasses and opened a shiny black loose-leaf notebook to a map of the Indian Ocean. A line drawn on the map went from Ethiopia and Somalia across the water past India, and then north up the Bay of Bengal, through the

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heart of Burma, to China's Yunnan province. "This map is just an example of how CNOC [the Chinese National Oil Company] sees the world," he explained.

He showed me another map, which zoomed in on Ethiopia and Somalia, with grid marks on the significant reserves of oil and natural gas in the Ogaden Basin on the Ethiopian-Somali border. A circle was drawn around Hobyo, a Somali port visited in the early 15th century by the Chinese admiral Zheng He, whose treasure fleets plied the same Indian Ocean sea lanes that serve as today's energy routes. "Oil and natural gas would be shipped from Hobyo direct to western Burma," the Bull said, where the Chinese are building a new port at Kyauk Phyu, in Burma's Arakan state, that will be able to handle the world's largest container ships. According to him, the map shows how easy it will be for the Chinese to operate all over the Indian Ocean, "tapping into Iran and other Persian Gulf energy suppliers." Their biggest problem, though, will be cutting through Burma. "The Chinese need to acquire Burma, and keep it stable," said the Bull.

There are other routes to energy-hungry inner China besides the one through Burma. The Chinese are also developing a deepwater port in Gwadar, in Pakistani Baluchistan, close to the Iranian border, and have plans to do the same in

of *The Australian*, has observed, India has been "aghast" to see the establishment of Chinese listening stations along Burma's border with India. So in 2001, India decided to provide Burma with military aid and training, selling it tanks, helicopters, shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles, and rocket launchers.

India also decided to build its own energy-pipeline network through Burma. In fact, during the 2007 crackdown on the monks in Burma, India's petroleum minister signed a deal for deepwater exploration. Off the coast of Burma's western Arakan state, adjacent to Bangladesh, are the Shwe gas fields, among the largest natural reserves in the world, from which two pipeline systems will likely emerge. One will be China's at Kyauk Phyu, which will take deliveries of oil and gas from as far away as the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa, as well as from Shwe itself. The other pipeline system will belong to India, which is spending \$100 million to develop the Arakanese port of Sittwe as a trade window for its own landlocked, insurgency-roiled northeast.

There is nothing sinister about any of this: it is the consequence of the intense need of hundreds of millions of people in India and China who will consume ever more energy as their lifestyles improve. As for China, it may not be a democracy, but little in its larger Indian Ocean strategy can be decried. China is not, and will likely never be, a truly hostile state like Iran.

But China's problems with Burma are actually just beginning, argues the Bull, and the United States must exploit them quietly. As he observed, the minutiae of tribal and ethnic differences can easily displace grand lines on a map and the plans of master strategists. Just look at Yugoslavia, at Iraq, at Israel-Palestine.

George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush have all declared their support for Burmese democracy, even as they have demonstrated little appetite for supporting the ethnic insurgencies.

Chittagong in Bangladesh. Both ports would be closer than Beijing and Shanghai to cities in western China. But the Burmese route is the most direct from the Indian Ocean.

This whole development is part of the Chinese navy's "string of pearls" strategy, which—coupled with a canal that the Chinese may one day help finance across Thailand's Isthmus of Kra, linking the Bay of Bengal with the South China Sea—will give China access to the Indian Ocean. China is, in effect, expanding south, even as India, to keep from being strategically encircled by the Chinese navy, is expanding east—also into Burma.

Until 2001, India, the world's largest democracy, took the high road on Burma, condemning it for its repression and providing moral support for the cause of Aung San Suu Kyi, who had studied in New Delhi. But as senior Indian leaders told me on a recent visit, India could not just watch Chinese influence expand unchecked. Burma's jungles serve as a rear base for insurgents from eastern India's own mélange of warring ethnic groups. Furthermore, as Greg Sheridan, foreign editor

Given the energy stakes, he sees the struggles of the Karens, Shans, Arakanese, and other minorities as constituting the "theater of activity" for his lifetime, something that the Turner firings had denied him. Burma is where the United States has to build a "UW [unconventional-war] capability," he said. Such would be the unofficial side of our competition with China, which should be forced over time to accept a democratic and highly federalized Burma, with strong links to the West.

Like the other three Americans, the Bull talked about the need to build and manage networks among the ethnic hill tribes, through the construction of schools, clinics, and irrigation systems. In particular, he focused on the Shan, the largest of the hill tribes, with 9 percent of Burma's population and about 20 percent of its territory. Allying with the Shans, he said, would give the United States a mechanism to curtail the flow of drugs in the area, and to create a balancing force against China right on its own border. In any Burmese democracy, the Shans would control a sizeable portion of the seats in parliament. More could be accomplished through nonmilitary aid

to a specific Burmese hill tribe, he argued, than through some of the larger weapons and other defense programs the United States spends money on. The same strategy could be applied to the Chins in western Burma, with the help of India. Not just in Iraq, but in Burma, too, American policy in the coming years should be all about the tribes.

WINNING THE ENDGAME

But while the former Special Forces and other Asia hands I interviewed see Burma as central to American strategy, the active-duty Special Operations community does not, because it is under orders to focus on al-Qaeda. This, my acquaintances say, shows how America's obsession with al-Qaeda has warped its strategic vision, which should be dominated by the whole Indian Ocean, from Africa to the Pacific.

Larger U.S. policy toward the Burmese regime, meanwhile, has remained unchanged over several administrations. George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush have all declared their support for Burmese democracy, even as they have demonstrated little appetite for supporting the ethnic insurgencies, however covertly. In that respect, American policy toward Burma can seem more moralistic than moral, and President Bush in particular, despite Laura Bush's intense interest in Burma, may seem prone to the same ineffectual preachiness of which former President Jimmy Carter has often been accused. Bush, by some accounts, should either open talks with the junta, rather than risk having the U.S. ejected from the whole Bay of Bengal region; or he should support the ethnics in an effective but quiet manner. "Right now, we get peanuts from the U.S.," Lian Sakhong, general secretary of the Burmese Ethnic Nationalities Council, told me.

American officials respond that they have in fact backed their affirmations of democracy with actions. The United States has banned investment in Burma since 1997 (though the ban is not retroactive, thereby leaving Chevron, which took over its concession from Unocal, free to operate a pipeline from southern Burma into Thailand). The United States added new sanctions in 2003 and 2007 and provides humanitarian aid through NGOs operating from Thailand. As for cross-border support for the Karen and Shan armies, officials note that the moment the word of such a policy got out, America's embassy presence in Burma would be gutted. Of course, it's unclear what good the U.S. diplomatic presence in Burma is doing.

Nevertheless, according to a top member of the nongovernmental-aid community, the United States is the only major power that sends the junta a "tough, moral message, which usefully prevents the International Monetary Fund and World Bank from dealing with Burma." As a result, Burma has less money to build dams and roads to further despoil the landscape and displace more people. U.S. policy, this source went on, "also rallies Western and international pressure that has led to cracks in the Burmese military." The regime will collapse one day, maybe sooner than later; when it does, America would presumably be in excellent stead with the Burmese people.

Though the prospect of another mass uprising excites the Western imagination, what's more likely is another military coup, or something more nuanced—a simple change in leadership, with Than Shwe, 75 years old and in poor health, allowed to step aside. Then, new generals would open up talks with Aung San Suu Kyi and release her from house arrest. Even with elections, this would not solve Burma's fundamental problems. Aung San Suu Kyi, as a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and global media star, could provide a moral rallying point that even the hill tribes would accept. But the country would still be left with no public infrastructure, no institutions, no civil society, and with various ethnic armies that fundamentally distrust the dominant Burmans. As one international negotiator told me, "There will be no choice but to keep the military in a leading role for a while, because without the military, there is nothing in Burma." In power for so long, however badly it has ruled, the military has made itself indispensable to any solution. "It's much more complicated than the beauty-and-the-beast scenario put forth by some in the West—Aung San Suu Kyi versus the generals," says Lian Sakhong. "After all, we must end 60 years of civil war."

Burma must somehow find a way to return to the spirit of the Panglong Agreement of February 1947, the pact that the nationalist leader, General Aung San, negotiated among the country's tribes shortly before independence from Great Britain. It was based on three principles: a state with a decentralized federal structure, recognition of the ethnic chieftaincies in the hills, and their right of secession after a number of years. Failure to implement that agreement, which collapsed after Aung San's assassination that summer, has been the cause of all the problems since.

Meanwhile, the war continues. When I asked Karen military leaders in the Thai border town of Mae Sot what they needed most, they told me: assault rifles, C-4 plastic explosives to make Claymore mines, and .50-caliber sniper systems with optics to knock out the microwave relay stations and bulldozers that the Burmese army uses to communicate and to build roads through Karen areas.

In his bunker in the jungle capital of Naypyidaw, Than Shwe sits atop an unsteady and restless cadre of mid-level officers and lower ranks. He may represent the last truly centralized regime in Burma's postcolonial history. Whether through a peaceful, well-managed transition or through a tumultuous or even anarchic one, the Karens and Shans in the east and the Chins and Arakanese in the west will likely see their power increased in a post-junta Burma. The various natural-gas pipeline agreements will have to be negotiated or renegotiated with the ethnic peoples living in the territories through which the pipelines would pass. The struggle over the Indian Ocean, or at least the eastern part of it, may, alas, come down to who deals more adroitly with the Burmese hill tribes. It is the kind of situation that the American Christian missionaries of yore knew how to handle. ▀

Robert D. Kaplan is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic* and a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, in Washington. His most recent book is *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts: The American Military in the Air, at Sea, and on the Ground* (2007).



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BOOKS

Editor's Choice: A new book showcases the jewelry of Ted Muehling, whose earnest, untrendy work reaches the height of stylishness.

A Bit of Punctuation

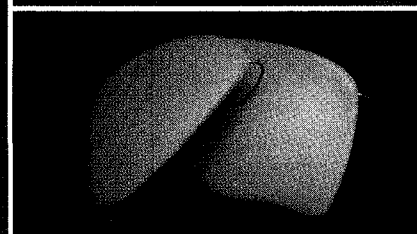
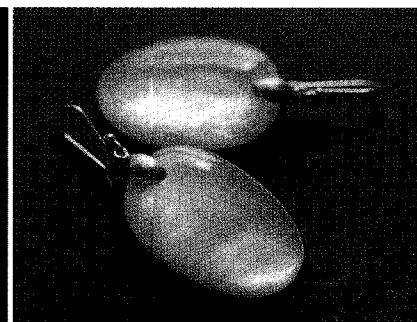
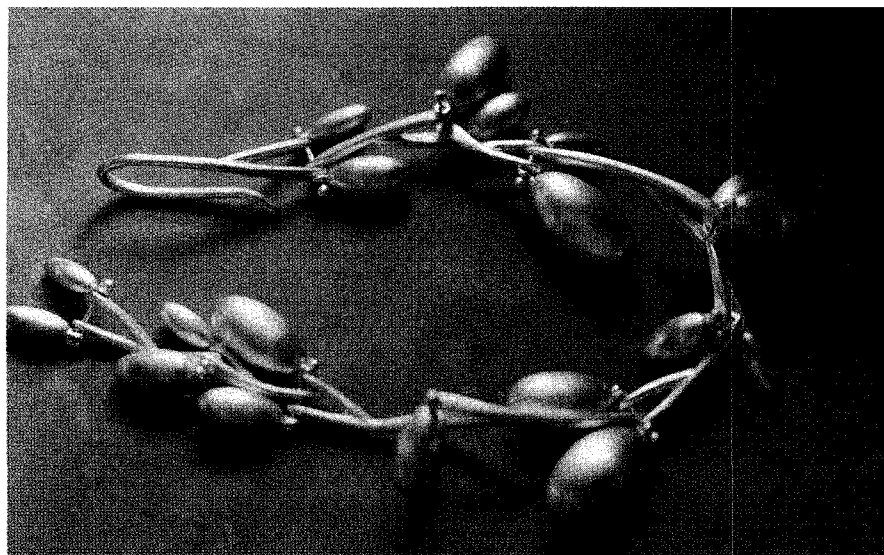
BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

South, below Grand Street and just above Canal—beyond the scene at the Mercer Hotel and at Balthazar, beyond those transplants from uptown (Prada, Bloomingdale's, the MoMA store, the Guggenheim), past the chain stores and the weekend throngs and those “galeries” that remain—SoHo quiets down into a calmer, still-bohemian enclave (or at least a semi-bohemian one). There, tucked on a short stretch of the four-block, semi-hidden Howard Street—reportedly the last street in Manhattan to get streetlights—cluster some of the city's most discerning specialty stores. Two are long-established anachronisms: E. Vogel, which has been making riding boots and men's shoes by hand since 1879; and the Putnam Rolling Ladder Company, which has been building library ladders since 1905. Two came recently: the winningly inventive Opening Ceremony, selling pioneering, quirky international fashion—long black Brazilian capes, finely knitted German undershirts—by designers and manufacturers you've almost certainly never heard of; and De Vera, a sort of hyper-curated flea market—a *Wunderkammer*, really—where necklaces made from ancient intaglios are displayed in artfully crammed vitrines alongside antique opium pipes and Victorian mourning jewelry.

And then there's the small, high-ceilinged store that serves as the magnet for newer boutiques—an ethereal place that draws the great fashion designer Narciso Rodriguez when, he told me, “I need some peace or an inspirational jolt,” a store whose subdued atmosphere, invariably described as “magical,” is accentuated by the intermittent *ting* of a jeweler's hammer from the studio in the back.



© DON FREEMAN FROM TED MUEHLING: A PORTRAIT BY DON FREEMAN, TEXT BY SUSAN YEAVICH, RIZZOLI NEW YORK, 2008



PRICELESS: "Olive branch" bracelet, "chip" earrings, "moth" earrings

This is the shop and workroom of Ted Muehling, whose jewelry and decorative objects have for 32 years been venerated among his fanatically devoted customers, a group that includes the most discriminating figures in the world of fashion and design. "Ted has the most refined aesthetic of any person I know, period," says Sally Singer, *Vogue's* fashion news/features director. "I've never heard anyone say his work is other than perfection."

But only the cognoscenti, albeit a relatively large number of them, are familiar with Muehling's creations. For one thing, the retiring, artistically earnest Muehling (counterculturally, he uses *earnest* as a term of high praise, and *ironic* as a term of derision) scorns the trendy. Seven years ago, he moved his shop to Howard Street from what is now the white-hot center of SoHo, because, as he explained to an interviewer, his original neighborhood "was just getting too spiffy." (By that criterion, he may be pulling up roots again soon: in June, Jil Sander, the fashion house specializing in beautifully minimalist clothing, opened a beautifully minimalist two-level boutique diagonally across from Muehling's shop.) He even all but eschews commerce. "It's almost like he's embarrassed to ask for money for what he does," one of his closest friends, Kim Hastreiter, the editor and co-founder of the chronicle of cutting-edge fashion and design, *Paper*

magazine, told me with a hint of exasperation. He insists on making all his jewelry—his most coveted and esteemed work—in his studio, so his production is perforce small. You can buy these pieces only at his atelier and four other places across the country (Bergdorf Goodman, uptown; Arp, in Los Angeles; Patina, on Nantucket; and Stanley Korshak, in Dallas), and even photographs of them are hard to come by, since he produces no catalog and his Web site forgoes showing any of his work.

Ted Muehling: *A Portrait* (Rizzoli), a long-awaited collaboration with the renowned photographer Don Freeman, is therefore a significant contribution to the literature on style and design, for it's easily the largest collection of images of his work available. It's far from comprehensive (Freeman includes no pictures of Muehling's thick-to-thin earrings or his graceful, twisty cuff links, to name two of his most enduring designs). But here, in the juxtaposition of photos of the scavenged natural objects littering Muehling's studio—antlers, fossils, shells, stones, pinecones, tree trunks, feathers, coral, branches, bird's nests—with those of his highly refined, flawlessly proportioned creations, readers can apprehend how Muehling, who was trained as an industrial designer at Pratt, pares down and streamlines natural forms to create

jewelry that's at once delicate and austere, organic and abstract.

More important, Freeman's photos cumulatively reveal the restraint and deliberation of Muehling's pieces—adornments that are paradoxically, as the uncompromising virtuoso designers Isabel and Ruben Toledo put it to me, "anti-decorative," which is really the key to their appeal. Notoriously shy, Muehling shuns the overwhelming in all forms and has, since he began making jewelry in 1976, explored the power of the diminutive and subtle. Attuned to how women want to be seen—and how they see each other—he rejects the notion of jewelry as an appendage or independent decoration and instead designs "a bit of punctuation," as he calls it in the book, to elliptically call attention to the woman and not the jewelry. (Nuanced and almost intentionally unspectacular, his jewelry tends to beguile women who've reached a certain emotional, or at least aesthetic, maturity.) As Hastreiter—who introduced Muehling and Freeman 25 years ago, and to whom they each dedicate this book—explained to me, Muehling says his work as a jeweler is animated by "the idea of seeing a woman walk down the street, taking in the way she strides, and then noticing something catch and reflect a little sparkle of light as it naturally dangles from her ear and frames her face." (His commercial policies, aimed at ensuring that

© DON FREEMAN FROM TED MUEHLING: A PORTRAIT, BY DON FREEMAN, TEXT BY SUSAN YELACH, RIZZOLI NEW YORK, 2008

not just the rich can buy his work, reflect that dedication. He sets the prices for his classic pieces—his “rice,” “berry,” and “chip” earrings; his “simple” bracelet—deliberately low, and despite constantly increasing costs, he hasn’t raised them.)

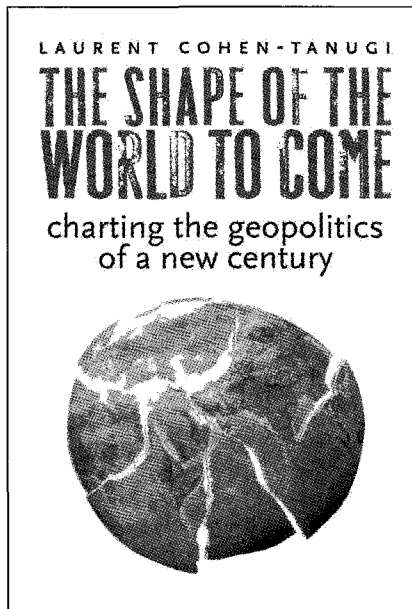
Women return that devotion. During the holidays, Hastreiter says, Muehling’s shop is jammed “from the moment it opens until the moment it closes with bewildered-looking cute husbands and boyfriends wandering around with crumpled pieces of paper in their hands with the drawings women made of the earrings they want their men to buy them.” By Christmas Eve, “his massive amount of painstakingly handcrafted precious merchandise has been eaten up as if by termites.”

To be sure, part of Muehling’s allure among his initiates transcends the aesthetic achievements so richly displayed in this book. Although Muehling’s work is quiet, it’s also, as Lynn Yaeger, the fashion critic for *The Village Voice* and a great admirer of Muehling’s artistry, wryly told me, “readily identifiable.” There’s no more efficient and cost-effective way for a woman to telegraph her rarefied taste than to hang a pair of Muehling’s rice earrings (\$110 in silver) from her lobes. The wearer signifies her supreme stylishness and her disregard for all things trendy; she’s utterly tasteful and knowing, while maintaining, as Yaeger archly puts it, her “downtown cred.” That’s a crucial but near-impossible balancing act for a socially and culturally vital swath of Manhattan womanhood—editrices in chief, politically progressive litigators, principal curators and museum directors, executive producers. In a spot-on urban-anthropological essay, the artist Christopher Russell noted that when people ask him about his son’s Greenwich Village elementary school, with its “ridiculously competitive” admissions, “studied casualness,” and smug “neighborhoody specialness” (it’s got to be Grace Church School), he tells them that “all the mothers wear Ted Muehling,” and the inquisitors—“or those in the know, anyway—immediately understand.” ▀

Benjamin Schwarz is *The Atlantic*’s literary editor and national editor.

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BOOKS

How Patty Hearst's kidnapping reflected
and ravaged American culture in the 1970s

Girl, Interrupted

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

The thing you have to understand about Patty Hearst, the reason that her fantastically *sui generis* story resonated so deeply within so many millions of ordinary American households, is that back then a lot of girls like her were disappearing. They were not California publishing heiresses, certainly; nor was the agency of their disappearance abduction at gunpoint. But disappear they did. One moment their lives could be summed up in a series of photographs not so different from the ones flashed on the nightly news over and over again: Patty in a first-communion dress at age 8; smiling with her gaggle of glossy-haired sisters as a young adolescent; sitting quietly—dreamily, inwardly—on the floor beside her mother's chair as a teenager, staring off into the mists of girl land. And the next moment—gone.

One day my older sister—the smart and dutiful one, the daughter everyone had placed their bets on—was helping my mother pin McCall's patterns to paisley linen, and the next she had crammed a sleeping bag and a passport into a rucksack and made her way to San Francisco International Airport with just enough money for a Eurail Pass, and although she did come back from Europe, she never really came back home. One of my friends had a glamorous older sister who fed the seals at Fairyland—she was long-legged and pretty, and she'd stand in her red miniskirt on a platform, tossing the fish—but then something happened; she went to live down in the flats, and her mother didn't want to see her anymore. There were boyfriends who brazenly took girls out of their houses without chatting up the fathers; there were blue jeans (it is hard to convey the chagrin that



middle-class mothers once felt at seeing their daughters in the loathed and stigmatized garment of their own Depression-era childhoods, instead of skirts and ironed dresses and lightweight cardigans). And most of all, underneath it all, there was the line connecting the dots

of the Eurail Passes and the screaming matches and even the blue jeans: sex.

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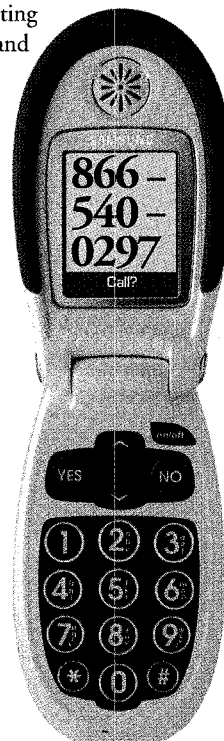
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phrase. Her answer would be incomplete; it would not reflect the tensions in her own household, but it would be true, nevertheless. All of the mothers of all the missing daughters said the same thing back then, with the same mixture of loathing, despair, and impotent anger. What had happened to turn that lovely daughter against you? "The culture."

Patty Hearst was a rich man's daughter, kidnapped for ransom by a group whose demands were delivered through public "communiqués" sent to radio stations. Clearly she would have made news in any era, but it took something more than the facts of her case, spectacular though they may have been, to account for the impact she had on the American public (between February 1974 and March 1976, she was on the cover of *Newsweek* seven times). The central question about her experience was also being asked in a million tiny dramas that were unfolding across the country—ruptures that turned on blue jeans and broken curfews and birth-control pills, rather than on joining a gang of armed revolutionaries: Had this well-tended and much-loved daughter really crossed over? And if she had, was she so far gone that even her own people might not want her back? For several months there, it was *The Searchers* lifted out of Monument Valley and plunked into the filthy coffeehouses and storefronts and communes of Berkeley and San Francisco. In the beginning of the saga, she was a nice girl, stolen from the safety of her home, who must be rescued with all due speed—before "something" happened to her, that unnamed thing being rape—and then (at the very least) she was a girl who had done whatever it took to survive her captors, who were clearly a revolting bunch. But eventually an awful lot of people became iffy about her. The day after she was caught on the security camera of a Hibernia Bank branch in the Sunset district of San Francisco carrying a semi-automatic carbine during a Symbionese Liberation Army holdup, a local homeowner removed the GOD BLESS YOU, PATTY sign from in front of his house.

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By the time the group was cornered in a house in Los Angeles—one that, in all likelihood, contained Patty as well as her abductors—the police engaged in a fire-fight that resulted in an explosion that incinerated the occupants, something the cops never would have risked if they had still been thinking of Patty as a victim. Once it was ascertained that she had not died in the inferno and was still on the lam with the two surviving members of the SLA, the DA announced the state's new official attitude toward the young woman who had been dragged, screaming, from her home, one that unintentionally summed up the entire event to perfection: Patty Hearst was no longer to be regarded as the victim of a kidnapping but rather as a suspect in one.

into the town house he and Patty shared; he came to stand, in the larger narrative, for a certain kind of boyfriend a daughter might bring home in those days, one whom disappointed but savvy parents would be wise to file under the category *Could Have Been Worse*. He may have been shaggy and unprepossessing—it was immediately clear that the first time he had been paraded through that lacquered front door in Hillsborough had not been a joyous occasion—but he was living with Patty as her “fiancé” (they had even posed for that most touching of bygone traditions, the engagement photograph), and theirs was the most conventional sort of domestic arrangement. They were like the kind of kids who used to live in “married-student housing”:

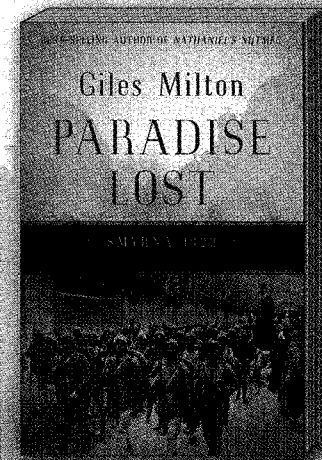
At the best university in the country,
she saw her own name everywhere,
carved into granite, printed on street signs.

The players in the drama all arrived onstage in the first scene. In Hillsborough, outside a beautiful house with a lacquered black door flanked by topiaries in marble pots, were the missing girl's rich parents, Catherine and Randolph Hearst. She clutched a handkerchief and lifted a hand to the pearls at her throat; he spoke calmly into the microphones, not so removed from his father's empire that he didn't have a newspaperman's instincts for using the press as a means of communicating a single, clear message: demands would be met, the safe return of his daughter was all he required. Patty's prodigious number of sisters, four in all, not one son in the family, also appeared, underscoring the vulnerability of girlhood. They were dead ringers for the lost one, each of them radiating grief and good grooming. In Berkeley was Steven Weed—his improbably perfect surname one of a million fillips to the story—a philosophy graduate student at Cal, slender and pale, sporting a bushy mustache, and badly beaten by the intruders who had burst

he beavered away at his seminar work, she attended classes and worked at Capwell's department store and did their laundry at the Wash House. The members of the SLA—a group of white, middle-class young people ensorcelled by a black thug named Donald David DeFreeze—had, a few months earlier, announced themselves on the local political scene by actually shooting someone, a feat of ambition and marksmanship that distinguished them from the hundreds of other radical “cells” festering in the Bay Area at the time. And what a target they had chosen: the hugely popular, young, black superintendent of the mostly black Oakland public-school system whose patently benign plan to distribute ID cards to the district's students they perceived as an intolerable act of fascist depersonalization.

When you execute a public official because you think he's a racist, but then even the Black Panthers denounce your act as a “brutal and senseless murder,” it's fair to say that your radicalism, despite its fervor, lacks a certain animating intel-

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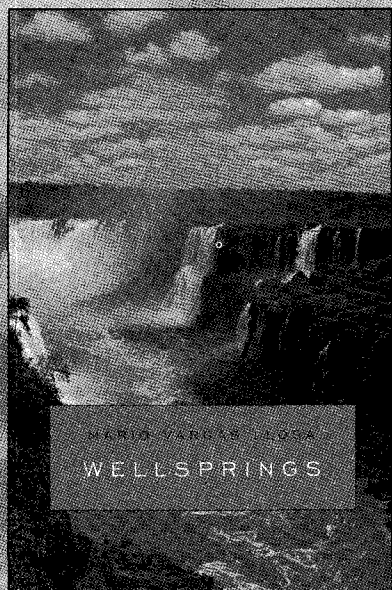
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ligence. That the group was, except for DeFreeze (who had renamed himself Cinque, after the leader of the slave revolt on the *Amistad*, a flattering nom de guerre for someone who had once made a living as a police snitch), lily-white and largely female was not adding up to anything promising, given their choice of victim, but they struck gold when they kidnapped Patty and held her for ransom, demanding in return, most prominently, a food giveaway for the Oakland poor. This was brilliant on two counts: it transformed them into selfless defenders of the downtrodden, and it served, as revolutionary acts are designed to do, not to improve a social situation but to inflame hatred where none had previously existed.

As Avery Island is to Tabasco sauce, so were 1970s Berkeley and San Francisco to white liberal guilt. When I was a fifth-grader in the Berkeley public schools (the first school system in the nation to integrate without a court order), I was taught—as part of a two-year course in Black History—that the word *picnic* had derived from the days of lynching parties, that it stood for “pick a nigger” and for the basket lunches that white women would pack for their families to eat while they enjoyed the spectacle. I happened to mention this to one of my parents’ academic friends, who sputtered in outrage—the word had originated from the French verb *piquer* and had nothing to do with American lynching. But it would not have occurred to her, the mother of two children in the schools, to complain about it. Black History, as it was then taught, was perhaps not academically rigorous, but it was understood by those white parents who even knew about it (in those days, middle-class parents did not carefully track their schoolchildren’s education like a rising or falling stock) to be part of some larger enterprise, some settling of an old debt.

Furthermore, the SLA’s general goals (if not their tactics) were those with which all of the Berkeley families I knew, including my own (staunch Democrats, surely, but by no stretch of the imagination radicals), would have heartily agreed.

As summed up by William Graebner in his forthcoming book, *Patty’s Got a Gun*, the band’s areas of concern centered on

the nation’s criminal justice and prison system; urban poverty and malnutrition; the widespread exploitation and oppression of the poor, blacks, Hispanics, women, and servants; and ... the sense that ordinary people had been conditioned by the public schools and drugged by materialistic consumer affluence into uncritical acceptance of their circumstances.

The SLA’s agenda merely brought under a single umbrella several of the separate causes espoused at two dozen Sproul Plaza card tables every day, at many of which my own bow-tied, Ivy League father would sign a petition or throw a couple of quarters in a jar before heading off for lunch and a beer at Kip’s.

But the food giveaway, covered at the top of the national news and endlessly on the local news channels (particularly on KQED, the San Francisco public-television affiliate, whose reporter Marilyn Baker owned the story and told of her work in *Exclusive!*, still the best, if least known, of the dozen books published by principals in the case), gave many Bay Area whites their first authentic taste of racism, the rising gore in the throat directed at the Other. That poor blacks were living in urban Oakland was a well-known fact and a cause for legitimate white shame (and, increasingly, political action), but that hundreds of them would eagerly accept groceries purchased with blood money from the grieving parents of an innocent girl, a girl still missing and possibly dead—that was something to be reckoned with. Clearly, those crowds weren’t motivated simply by a pressing dietary need for a can of Carnation tomato sauce and a box of Zoom cereal. This was payback.

Furthermore, the people clamoring for the food treated one another abominably. While the United Farm Workers

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inspired respect by the very dignity of their appeals, the stoicism with which they accepted charity, and the solidarity in which they stood, the people storming the trucks behaved barbarically; many were gravely injured, including a woman who lost an eye. Somebody jumped aboard a truck loaded with hundreds of hams and hijacked the damn thing, whisking them far away from the Oakland poor and, presumably, taking them somewhere a profit could be turned.

The food giveaway exposed the SLA to a disappointing truth about human nature that was never even alluded to in the Little Red Book or *For the Liberation of Brazil*: that most poor people don't yearn to be classless; most poor people yearn to be rich. Give a man a ham and he'll eat tonight; give a man a truck full of hams, and maybe he'll get his pinkie ring out of hock. But all of that was a long way off, and there were miles to go before the SLA made its decisive and fatal blunder, the one that exposed its members to a force more powerful and unilateral than anything in their collective experience of racism, sexism, incarceration in the California prison system, or the hammer fist of capitalist imperialism could have possibly prepared them for: the LAPD.

Graebner's book is surprisingly slender, given the scope of its subject: it barely reprises the facts of the case, but rather considers at length the various cultural meanings he finds within it. He paints on a large canvas, one that makes room for (among many others) *King Lear*, Madonna, *Psycho*, Terrence Malick's *Badlands*, Joan of Arc, Alzheimer's disease, *Saturday Night Fever*, anorexia nervosa, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Alex Haley's *Roots*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, Eliot Spitzer, *The Deer Hunter*, *American Idol*, *The Stepford Wives*, Betty Ford, the *Spirit of St. Louis*, Ann Landers, *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, Edward Kennedy, *The Amityville Horror*, and—an ace up his sleeve—*Barry Lyndon*. More helpfully, he discusses the concept of brainwashing and catalogs the testimony on that technique given



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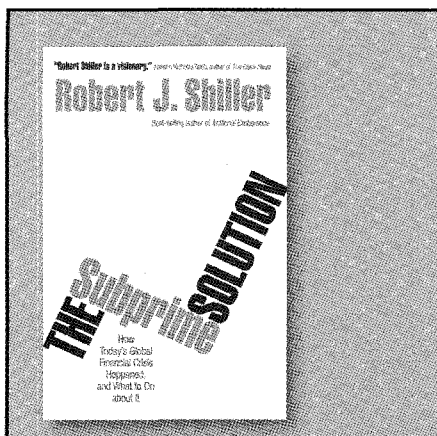
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by experts during Hearst's trial, which only serves to point out how limited the research was when it came to understanding what happened to Patty Hearst: most of the work on this subject has been conducted in a military setting, with subjects who were male, trained for combat, and aware that they were engaged in work that exposed them to grave danger, and who had—at the very least—been provided with a set of guidelines on what they were allowed to reveal to an enemy captor. To place what happened to Patty Hearst into such a context is to allow oneself to be willfully ignorant of the delicate and emotionally charged state of late girlhood, and of the act of passing into young womanhood, a process that for Patty Hearst—because of the sheltering that came with her wealth—was probably slower and more tentative than for many other American girls her age.

a rape), or when one might bide one's time—drawing the culprit into conversation, waiting for the right moment to make a move—there is one criminal act that you should never willingly allow, one act that you should resist as intensely as if you had already made the decision to die then and there: never, under any circumstances, allow the person to move you from one location to another. He will surely take you to some place more secluded, more advantageous to him, and he will almost certainly do terrible things to you and kill you there.

Patty Hearst didn't know that fact when her peaceful night of studying—she and Steven had eaten the off-campus-housing dinner of champions (sandwiches and Campbell's soup), they had just finished watching *Mission: Impossible* and *The Magician*, she was in her bathrobe—exploded into violence. She

**She found a way to stop the rapes,
not by resisting the sex, but by falling in love
with the man performing it.**

No one feels sorry for a girl on a yacht, as the old saying goes, and much of the harshness that Patty Hearst encountered from the American public, the criminal-justice system, and even many of her own biographers stems from their feelings about the Hearst fortune and history, as though all of those home movies of her grandfather entertaining Charlie Chaplin and Carole Lombard at San Simeon had somehow devolved onto Patty, and had made her older and wiser and more experienced than her years suggest. In fact, they had done the opposite.

Experts in the relatively new field of how to survive a violent crime—something that ordinary Americans are more and more interested in learning—are unanimous in their opinion of how to handle one particular scenario. They grimly admit that although there are times when a victim may have to succumb to a culprit's demands in order to survive the attack (for example, enduring

did not know that she would be beaten, bound and gagged, and thrown into the trunk of a car, and that from there she would be transferred to a closet, in which she would be raped repeatedly and told that she might soon be executed, and that for the first few days she would not even be allowed to use a toilet. As Graebner reports, for the first seconds of her captivity, she thought she was being buried alive, as Barbara Jane Mackle, the victim of a spectacularly hideous kidnapping, had been five years earlier.

The first sexual assault happened when her hands were briefly freed inside the closet. Cinque responded to this by grabbing her crotch and squeezing her breasts, an act that Graebner characterizes as "fondling" and that a (male) expert witness for the prosecution said was not "sexual assault" but rather an example of Cinque "venting his anger." Can any man understand what it is like for a woman to be sexually brutalized? Patty

Hearst was a young woman who had cut short a dream vacation to Europe not only because she missed her boyfriend, but because the behavior of Mediterranean men frightened her: "Rome is really beautiful, but I'm afraid to go out of the hotel alone—men don't just whistle here, they run at you and try to grab you!" She was a woman so moored in the proprieties of her Catholic mother that when she entered an ongoing sexual relationship, she legitimized it (in her own heart, if not her mother's) by placing it within a domestic context, and by sealing its niceness with the promise of a wedding.

And there she was, in the dark, with the first groping eventually leading to the first rape—"he did his thing and left"—an event made doubly wretched by the fact that she knew the rest of the gang was on the other side of the closet door, listening. Other rapes followed. The SLA was probably the first band of revolutionaries to marry a commitment to radical feminism with the use of systematic rape as a means of recruitment. Terrified in the closet, harangued night and day as part of her "reeducation," dreading the next assault, she discovered that privileges—using the toilet, a chance to brush her teeth with the communal toothbrush—could be earned not by enduring another beating but merely by telling her captors that she agreed with them, that she could see their point of view. Who could hold it against her?

And then she even found a way to stop the rapes, at least some of them. She did it not by resisting the sex, but by falling in love with one of the men who was performing it. In its way, that was a powerful thing to do—to transform the nature of an act by changing the way you think about it. Willie Wolfe was young and good-looking, and not immune to the gratification of having charmed the captive girl whose face was now one of the most famous in the world. They became boyfriend and girlfriend within the SLA—a boyfriend and girlfriend who had to accommodate, within their love, Patty's ongoing role as comfort girl to the other male members—a couple whose relationship included the

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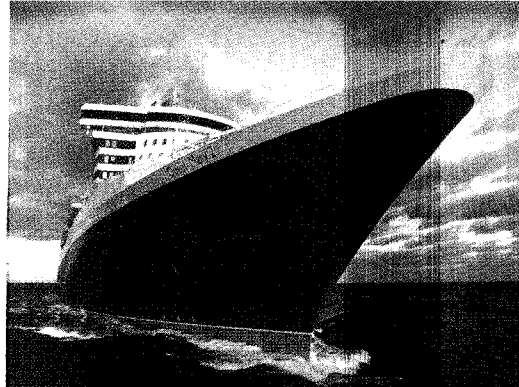


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giving of a special gift: a small, carved monkey on a leather thong that, as Patty tells us girlishly in her memoir, *Every Secret Thing*, was Wolfe's "most treasured possession."

It was a particularly feminine thing to do, to try against all the odds to place one's sex life within the context of romance and affection, and—another irony—it was one of the things that led to her guilty verdict at trial. In her purse at the time of her arrest was the little monkey, the double of one found underneath Wolfe's charred remains in the Los Angeles safe house. Before these charms were introduced into evidence, the jury was on Patty's side: "Everyone's heart went out to her," one juror said of the group's response to the kidnapping, beatings, and rape; "how could you help it? We felt overwhelming sympathy for her." The evidence about the bank robbery was compelling, but that little trinket from the boyfriend hardened everyone's heart. "That was what changed my mind," said one female juror; "I really saw how much she was lying. It just had to be lying, through and through." Love and sex: they will catch a woman up every time.

On the second page of his book, Graebner makes a familiar complaint about his subject—Patty Hearst was dull: "Not dull to a fault, and not dull as in stupid. Just ordinary." Ordinary! Here was a young woman who was an heiress when the term evoked not a Hilton sister but rather a creature from a different time, a different America. When Patty Hearst was a little girl, San Simeon had not yet been given to the state of California, and it was her favorite place to spend family vacations, swimming in the marble Neptune pool and riding horses on the endless mountain trails. She was a student at the best university in the country, a place where everywhere she looked she saw her own name, carved into granite, printed on street signs: Hearst amphitheater, Hearst Gym, Hearst Avenue. At the time of her abduction, she was enrolled in the lecture class of one of my parents' friends,

a fact the professor realized only because when she had first run her finger down the endless printout of names, there it was: Hearst.

And yet, this creature with the glittering past and the famous name was engaged in a bit of youthful reinvention at complete odds with—and therefore much more original, and even more outrageous, than—that of the city's thousands of other students and young drifters. While they were involved in a self-conscious attempt to shake their middle-class mores and expectations, she was trying, just as self-consciously—Capwell's, the Wash House—to adopt those mores. She was trying to create a life for herself that was not like her mother's but was more in line with the happy lives she saw depicted on television—she was a fantastic television watcher before her capture—and the kidnapping put an ugly and abrupt end to that sweet intention.

Patty Hearst caught our attention because she was an innocent and largely naive young woman who was being fought over, in public, by two powerful forces: her parents and "the culture" in its most extreme and violent manifestation. At one particularly heartrending moment, her father defended her against charges that she had joined the SLA: "We've had her 20 years; they've only had her 60 days," he said. Then Catherine Hearst broke her usual silence: "I know my girl." That's why we couldn't let the story go, not because Patty herself fascinated us, but because we were desperate to know, in the epic battle for her affections, whom she would choose: Catherine or Cinque? It was the kind of question many of us were grappling with in our own lives, and Patty Hearst gave us the perfect excuse to talk about our own situations without really talking about them, not directly. We needed someone like her just then. As the U.S. attorney said in his closing arguments, by way of reminding the jurors how Patty had ended up on trial: "She didn't call us. We called her." ▀

Caitlin Flanagan is the author of *To Hell With All That* (2006). She is at work on *Girl Land*, a book about the emotional life of pubescent girls.

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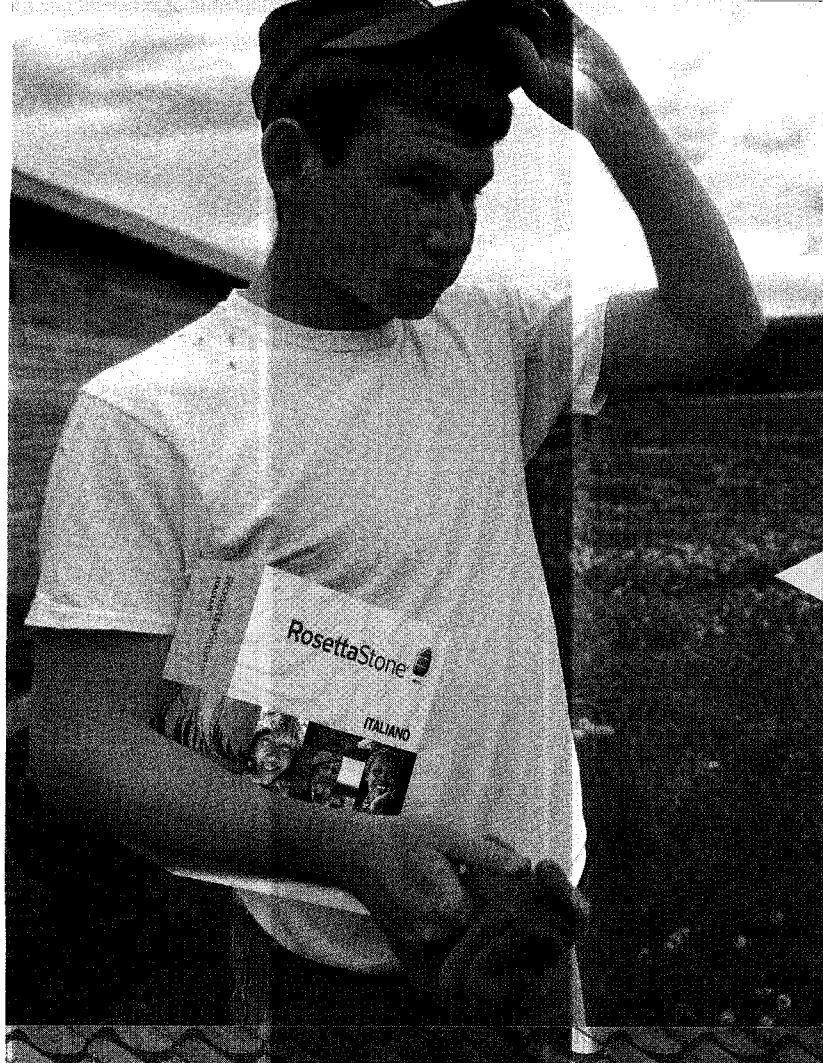
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BOOKS

Norman Mailer's political journal of the summer of '68

Master of Conventions

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

"I am a 'left conservative.'" That was Norman Mailer's jaunty but slightly defensive self-description when first I met him, at the beginning of the 1980s. At the time, I was inclined to attribute this glibness (as I thought of it) to the triumph of middle age and to the compromises perhaps necessary to negotiate the then-new ascendancy of Ronald Reagan. But, looking back over his extraordinary journal of a plague year, written 40 years ago, I suddenly appreciate that Mailer in 1968 had already been rehearsing for some kind of ideological synthesis, and discovering it in the most improbable of places.

Party conventions have been such dull spectacles of stage management for so long that this year it was considered nothing less than shocking that delegates might arrive in Denver with anything more than ceremonial or coronational duties ahead of them. The coverage of such events, now almost wholly annexed by the cameras and those who serve them, has undergone a similar declension into insipidity. Mailer could see this coming: having left the 1968 Republican gathering in Miami slightly too early,

he realized he had missed the most exciting night of the convention, at least on the floor, and was able to console himself only with the sad knowledge that he could cover it better on television than if he had been there.

This wasn't quite true yet: what we have here is the last of the great political-convention essayists, and the close of a tradition that crested with H.L. Mencken and was caught so deftly in Gore Vidal's play *The Best Man*. You will note the way in which Mailer decided to write about himself in the third person, using the



name "the reporter." This isn't invariably a good idea, but it generally works in this instance, even when Mailer muses, of himself, that the

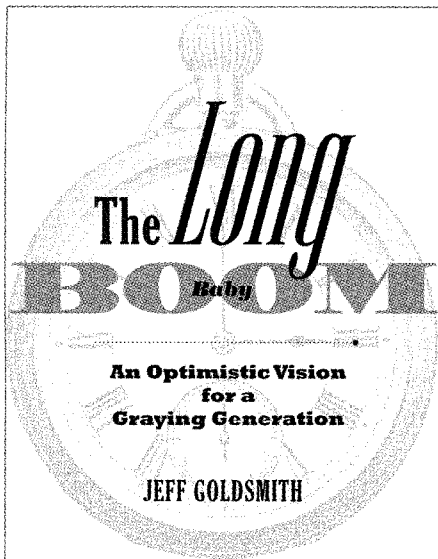
Democratic Convention in 1960 in Los Angeles which nominated John F. Kennedy, and the Republican in San Francisco in 1964 which installed Barry Goldwater, had encouraged some of his very best writing.

Naturally, much of the material has become "dated," but in interesting ways. It now seems absurd that anyone ever thought Nelson Rockefeller could become the GOP nominee in 1968, but Mailer swiftly concluded at the time that the idea of a Rockefeller victory was ridiculous. (He had learned a lot from

that Goldwater convention, as he repeatedly demonstrates.) Nor does he ever forget the context in which these still-stately bunting-decked occasions were managing to occur:

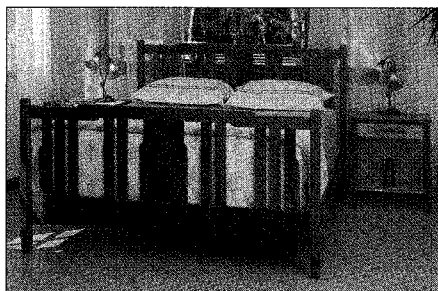
The novelist John Updike was not necessarily one of his favorite authors, but after the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, it was Updike who had made the remark that God might have withdrawn His blessing from America. It was a thought which could not be forgotten.

At all times, Mailer had the apocalyptic available to him, and was perfectly receptive to the images of civil war, military coup, sniper fire, and racial conflagration. ("And the country roaring like



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a bull in its wounds, coughing like a sick lung in the smog, turning over in sleep at the sound of motorcycles, shivering at its need for new phalanxes of order ...") However—and this has to be set against his somewhat promiscuous attitude toward violence and obscenity and *les actes gratuits*—he did shamefacedly admit that there was a bourgeois side to these matters, too:

A profound part of him (exactly that enormous literary bottom of the mature novelist's property!) detested the thought of seeing his American society—evil, absurd, touching, pathetic, sickening, comic, full of novelistic marrow—disappear now in the nihilistic maw of a national disorder.

The caveats there, almost embarrassed—and embarrassing, too, as Mailer grunts that if he lost his country, he might also lose his fictional subject—are less important than the admission that they are half intended to qualify and cannot entirely succeed in obscuring: the gruff admission that our Norman could be a patriot after all.

More remarkably, instead of locating the then-bruited "white backlash" in other people (such as southern Republican voters), Mailer in Miami confessed it stirring in himself:

It was a simple emotion and very unpleasant to him—he was getting tired of Negroes and their rights ... He was weary to the bone of listening to Black cries of Black superiority in sex, Black superiority in beauty, Black superiority in war ... the claims were all too often uttered by Negroes who were not very black themselves.

It was in 1968 that the Republican Party lost—or more accurately abandoned—its historic status as "the party of Lincoln," and Mailer's own resentments against black militancy did not prevent him from seeing this. He had always detested the sly author and beneficiary of the "southern strategy," so it is to the credit of the reportage here that he attempted to find the thin but definite human pulse that animated the middle-class base of

Richard Milhous Nixon. He located it, aptly enough, in the distant connection that Nixon could claim with the hero of Republicanism:

They venerated Nixon for his service to Eisenhower, and his comeback now—it was his comeback which had made him a hero in their eyes, for America is the land which worships the Great Comeback, and so he was Tricky Dick to them no more, but the finest gentleman in the land; they were proud to say hello.

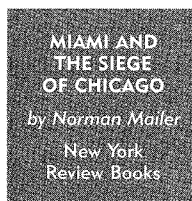
Pauline Kael was later to make herself a laughingstock by exclaiming in astonishment that she didn't "know *anybody*" who had voted for Nixon. Mailer was determined to avoid this mistake in advance, confessing his ignorance and admitting that in a large Miami ballroom filled with delegates, "there were not ten people he recognized." The only other person of liberal/radical temper who tried to avoid condescending to Nixon and to Nixonism was that other master of convention-floor prose, the late

Murray Kempton.

And it was from Kempton that Mailer borrowed what eventually became the running theme and essential insight of his attendance at both events:

Politics is property ... a delegate's vote is his holding—he will give it up without return no more than a man will sign over his house entire to a worthy cause.

More self-evident, perhaps, among the Chamber of Commerce types in Miami (and Nelson Rockefeller, with his "cat-fish mouth"), this extended metaphor worked particularly well—and Mailer did his level best to extend it—in the gaunt, unsentimental world of Chicago-stockyard ward-heeling: that rugged inland coast on which the waves of '60s idealism broke in vain. It wasn't to be "new phalanxes of order" that were con-jured. It was the bitter old phalanx of the Daley machine and the Chicago PD. Of necessity, the Illinois chapter was much longer and more intense than the Florida



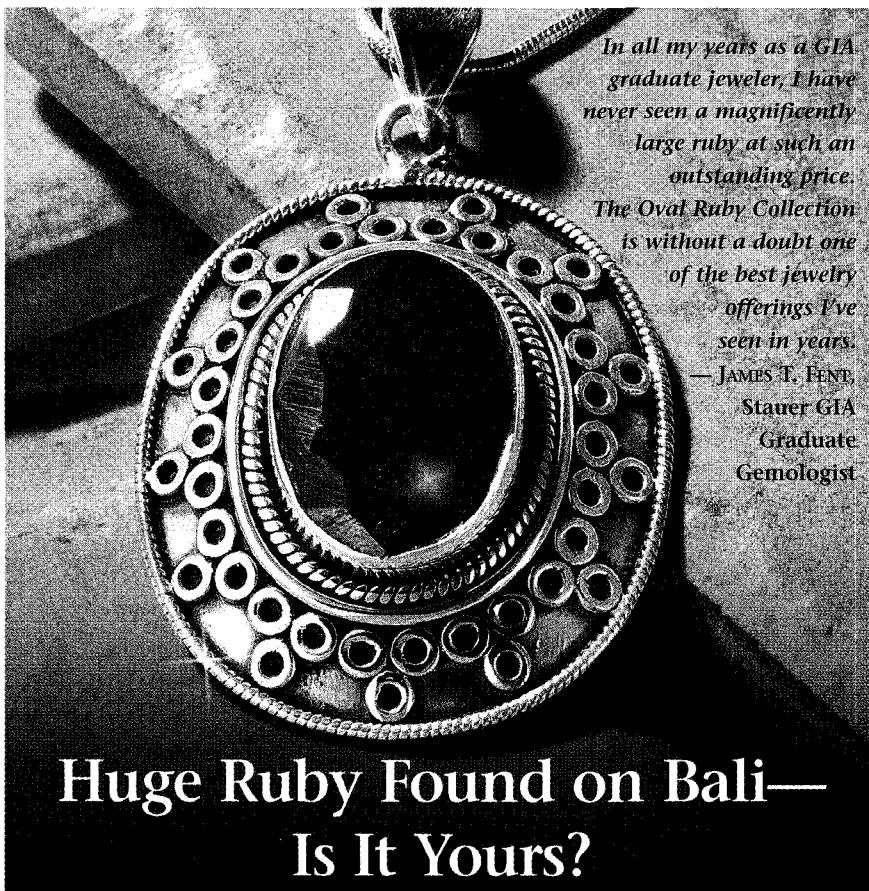
one, but before we shift the scene it is worth saluting Mailer, first for seeing clearly that Nixon would be "the one" and second for guessing that Ronald Reagan might well be the next one. His method in the second case was equally intuitive. He noticed the clever rebound from the Goldwater defeat while also understanding the purely showbiz aspect:

If [Reagan] didn't get the girl, it was because he was too good a guy to be overwhelmingly attractive. That was all right. He would grit his teeth and get the girl next time out. Since this was conceivably the inner sex drama of half of respectable America, he was wildly popular with Republicans. For a party which prided itself on its common sense, they were curiously, even outrageously, sentimental.

If the *aperçu* in that last sentence was slightly stronger than the grammar in which it was expressed, it must be said in general that for deadline prose, this was written to an exceedingly high standard. It was a goodish year for the literary man as frontline magazine reporter: quitting Lincoln Park as he sensed violent confrontation that would go beyond his probable endurance, Mailer ran into Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Jean Genet, and Terry Southern on their way in. And one guesses a very slight problem of journalistic etiquette here, in that Mailer was the accredited correspondent of *Harper's* magazine, while Burroughs and Genet had been retained by *Esquire*, and it would have made a rather better story if it had been Mailer arriving while the others were getting themselves discreetly out of the line of fire, instead of the other way about.

Could that gifted but gruesome two-some of Burroughs and Genet help to explain Mailer's recurrence to the threat of nihilism? He hated the war and the police and had contempt for the mobbed-up big mayors and union men who constituted the muscle of the Democrats. But he found Eugene McCarthy brittle and dislikable, and McCarthy supporters addicted to defeat. Then there was this:

He liked his life. He wanted it to go on, which meant that he wanted



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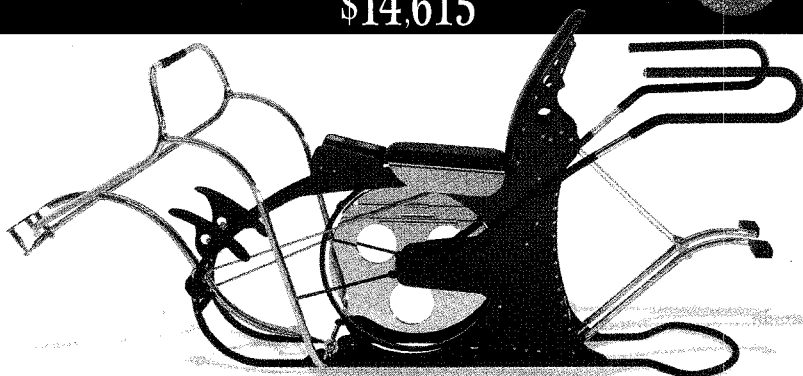
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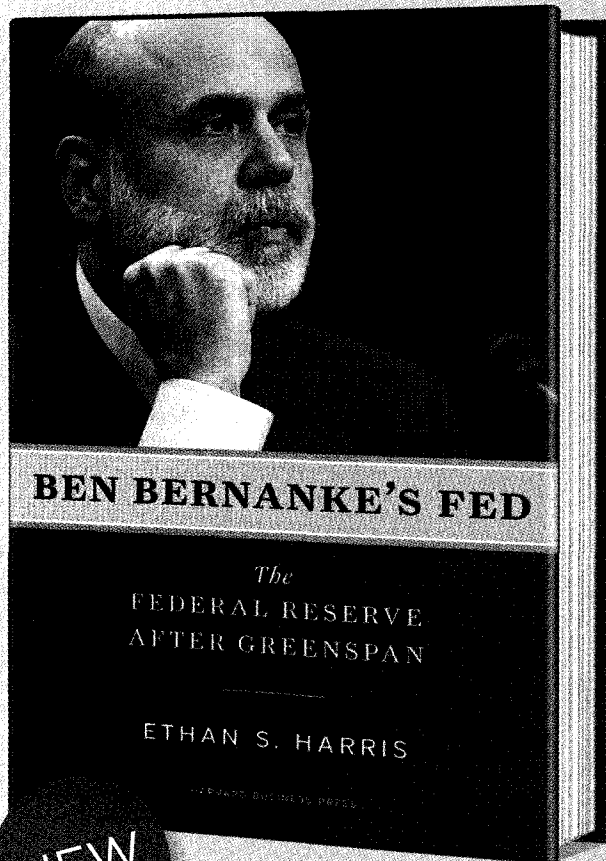
America to go on—not as it was going, not Vietnam—but what price was he really willing to pay?

Mailer here was being plaintive but honest, as in the case of his admission of his Lincoln Park funk. It was becoming another of those moments where the best lacked all conviction while the worst ... well, we know how that goes. Incidentally, one can't be too careful about citing familiar poetry. Mailer quotes Edward Kennedy as saying of Bobby's supporters that they had "followed him, honored him, lived in his mild and magnificent eye," and one suddenly realizes that he thinks he is quoting Teddy himself rather than Robert Browning's famous lines from "The Lost Leader." As Joan Didion once observed, there are those who say "No man is an island" who firmly believe that they are echoing Ernest Hemingway.

Our Democratic primaries are run the way they are now mainly because of the way they were run then. Mailer drily watched the roll call in Chicago and noted that the state that put Hubert Humphrey over the top (Pennsylvania) was the one where McCarthy had received 90 percent of the primary votes. To touch on another comparison with today's politics, Mailer noticed in Miami that Nixon had won the nomination in such a way as to also win the election: in other words, without splitting or embittering his party. These and similar reflections are of interest and value in a year when the Democratic nominee is, in one of his many protean incarnations, a Chicago South Side operator with a wife whose father was a Daley precinct captain, while the Republican candidate is a repository of something in which almost nobody in 1968 would ever have believed: America's residual pride about its own valor in Vietnam. The almost-closing line of the book is the prediction that Mailer wishes he had made to Eugene McCarthy's daughter: "Dear Miss, we will be fighting for forty years." He got that right, among many other things. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is an Atlantic contributing editor and a Vanity Fair columnist.

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BIOGRAPHY and MEMOIR



Charles Eliot Norton

by Linda Dowling (New Hampshire)

From his friendships with Emerson and Carlyle to his influence on the Pre-Raphaelite and Ruskinian movements, the American man of letters Charles Eliot Norton played an important role in the cultural cross-pollination that so enriched Britain and the United States in the 19th century. Drawing on unpublished portions of his journals, Dowling shows a man bereft of religious faith struggling to develop a principled ethic of civic liberalism in contrast to the predominant values of the Gilded Age. He was censured during his lifetime for his opposition to the Spanish-American War, but more than a century later he stands out as a lodestar of opposition to the excesses and coarseness characteristic of his age—and, unfortunately, of our own.

Up for Renewal

by Cathy Alter (Atria)

This book is the latest in the Year-in-the-Life-of-Me genre (made enormous by Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*). Alter's year, however, is wrapped in the ironic device of women's magazines. To tackle the mess she's made of her life, the author turns to several women's glossies each month for a fix. It would have been simple to skewer the easily-made-fun-of medium, as well as her own life, but Alter writes with an adroit combination of reverence and irreverence. Her sharp tongue can be a little too piercing when turned on people who are clearly important in her life, but it's most effectively applied when demolishing herself. Most chapters are polished; a few feel inelegant and gawky; others voyeuristic. But ultimately the book is revealing, not just about the author's behavior and the very private thoughts in an insecure woman's brain that

usually go unheard (it feels like public therapy), but also about why women's magazines are such a monumental part of women's culture in 21st-century America.

The Wagner Clan

by Jonathan Carr (Grove/Atlantic)

Carr illuminates both the artistic and ideological aspects of some singular and often forbidding folk. Memorable portraits of Nietzsche and Liszt stand out, but there's no doubt who dominates. Quite properly, it's the revolutionary figure of Richard Wagner, who had such influence inside the opera house but whose effect on the wider world was also momentous. The book takes us into Hitler's Reich and even into the odd world of today's Bayreuth, where the Wagner family still holds sway.

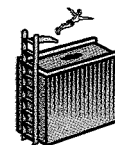
Ghost Train to the Eastern Star

by Paul Theroux (Houghton Mifflin)

Ernest Bevin famously asserted his desire to be free to go to Victoria station and buy a ticket to "anywhere I damn please." By that measure, Theroux—sometime expatriate and perennial traveler—must be living one of the freest of lives. In this latest work, he revisits the book that began it all for him, *The Great Railway Bazaar*. Once again crisscrossing Asia (now so changed more than 30 years on), Theroux uses the many vastly different trains as his magic carpet. Whether talking with Orhan Pamuk in Turkey or passing through Birobidjan, Stalin's failed experiment in Zionism, Soviet style, Theroux is a master at spotlighting the central and the arcane. Who else could so aptly liken the Trans-Siberian Express, surprisingly seedy amid the excesses of capitalist Russia, to "a ship, not any old ship, and not a cruise liner, but an old iron freighter plowing through a frozen sea, complete with grumpy deckhands, bad food, and an invisible captain"? Constantly reflecting and refracting his

surroundings, Theroux is the ultimate globetrotter, finding something of value wherever he roams.

FICTION



Cost

by Roxana Robinson (FSG)

Set mostly in a Maine summerhouse more charming than functional, this is a strikingly realistic, psychologically astute study of family relations in modern America's educated class. As in a family itself, competing perceptions of events past and present crowd the pages. Self-involved preoccupations overwhelm many touching moments of understanding; defensive postures become hurtful habits nearly impossible to shift. But when compared with the single-minded obsession of the younger son, whose heroin addiction organizes the plot, the degree to which the rest of the characters value and care for one another, despite their normal measure of self-interest, is arresting. Robinson gracefully launches and bolsters her psychological insights with the concrete details of her settings. As always, she writes with impressive polish at both the sentence and structural levels.

The House on Fortune Street

by Margot Livesey (HarperCollins)

In this engrossing novel of unhappy love, the author traces the betrayals that surround a suicide through four discrete but interconnected narratives: those of the despairing woman, her father, her best friend, and her best friend's boyfriend. None of these characters is evil, none commits the transgression that precipitates the suicide, but all are driven, understandably yet horrifyingly, to behave in devious ways that wound others badly. Enriched with literary allusion and with locales that span the whole of Great Britain, Livesey's compelling stories, reaching back into



her characters' childhoods, together with her understated tone and steady, almost reportorial style, show how commonplace, how nearly inevitable, duplicity is.

HISTORY



Lili Marlene:

The Soldiers' Song of World War II
by Liel Leibovitz and Matthew Miller
(Norton)

Not even the most iconic of songs necessarily deserves its very own biography, but in the case of that Second World War classic, "Lili Marlene," dear to soldiers and civilians on both sides, there really is a fascinating story to tell. Forged in the crucible of 20th-century German history, a First World War poem, picked up by Berlin's cabaret scene, became a song with music by one of Hitler's favorite composers, recorded by an ambitious, anti-Nazi singer. Lively and well-informed, this book tells it all, with lots of attention to the travails of those involved. Nazi music had some rousing tunes, but generally the lyrics were rebarbative. Here the sentiments are unobjectionable and universal, just made for a time when the shadow of the barracks gate was bound to heighten romance under lamplight for a world at war.

The Russian Civil War

by Evan Mawdsley (Pegasus)

Just how inevitable was the Red victory in the ferocious civil conflict that followed the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917? Mawdsley, an admirably levelheaded British historian, shows that despite the fractured nature and inherent weakness of the White forces, the odds were heavily stacked against the Reds. They faced foreign military intervention and a vast battleground that favored their foes. Mawdsley skillfully boils down complex situations without oversimplifying them, and his vivid, readable account of this savage war is now the most authoritative in English.

SOCIETY and CULTURE



America Eats!

by Pat Willard (Bloomsbury)

Fortunate is the nation in peril that pulls together, rather than becoming fratricidal. The United States managed to do so

during the Great Depression, providing a lovely example of American exceptionalism at a time when so many other societies sought after false ideological gods and dictators. One unifying New Deal program, more or less forgotten until this book, was the WPA/Federal Writers' Project survey of how America was managing to eat socially in that thin time. Writers who would later become famous—such as Saul Bellow, Eudora Welty, and Nelson Algren—enlisted in the enterprise, but most of the entries in these posthumous snapshots are by local writers describing everything from church socials to county fairs to wakes. The recipes are nothing to write home about, but the spirit of camaraderie, and the determination to not let penury rob everyday existence of the companionable joys of food, are moving and instructive 70 years on.

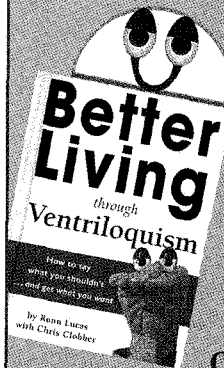
Curse of the Black Gold:

50 Years of Oil in the Niger Delta

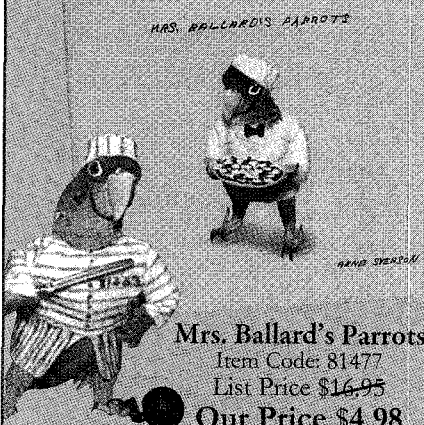
edited by Michael Watts; photographs by Ed Kashi (powerHouse)

The world's sixth-largest oil producer, Nigeria has for five decades paid a calamitous cost for the poor administration of its vast resource wealth. Somehow, though, its singular case has been little considered on a human scale. No more. With text by noted activists (including the Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka) and indelible images from the award-winning photojournalist Kashi, this graphic work trains an engaged lens on the paradoxical plights of the Niger Delta. (That abject poverty exists there amid riparian plenty is merely one; that the region is a renowned biodiversity center contending with epic environmental degradation is another.) Exploitation, we see, takes many forms, with even the most overt upshots—economic crises, community collapse—often hidden in plain view, among everyday faces (villagers, children, militants). More than an unflinching look at how one country's promise of prosperity was fouled by oil's crude stain, this is a nuanced consideration of "the resource curse" with few clear antecedents (Daniel Yergin's *The Prize* and Ryszard Kapuscinski's *Shah of Shahs* come to mind, but little else). The design, meantime, makes this a volume both glossily compelling and hard-wearing—a handsome coffee-table tome that will present nicely at your next humanitarian klatsch.

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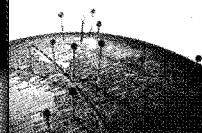
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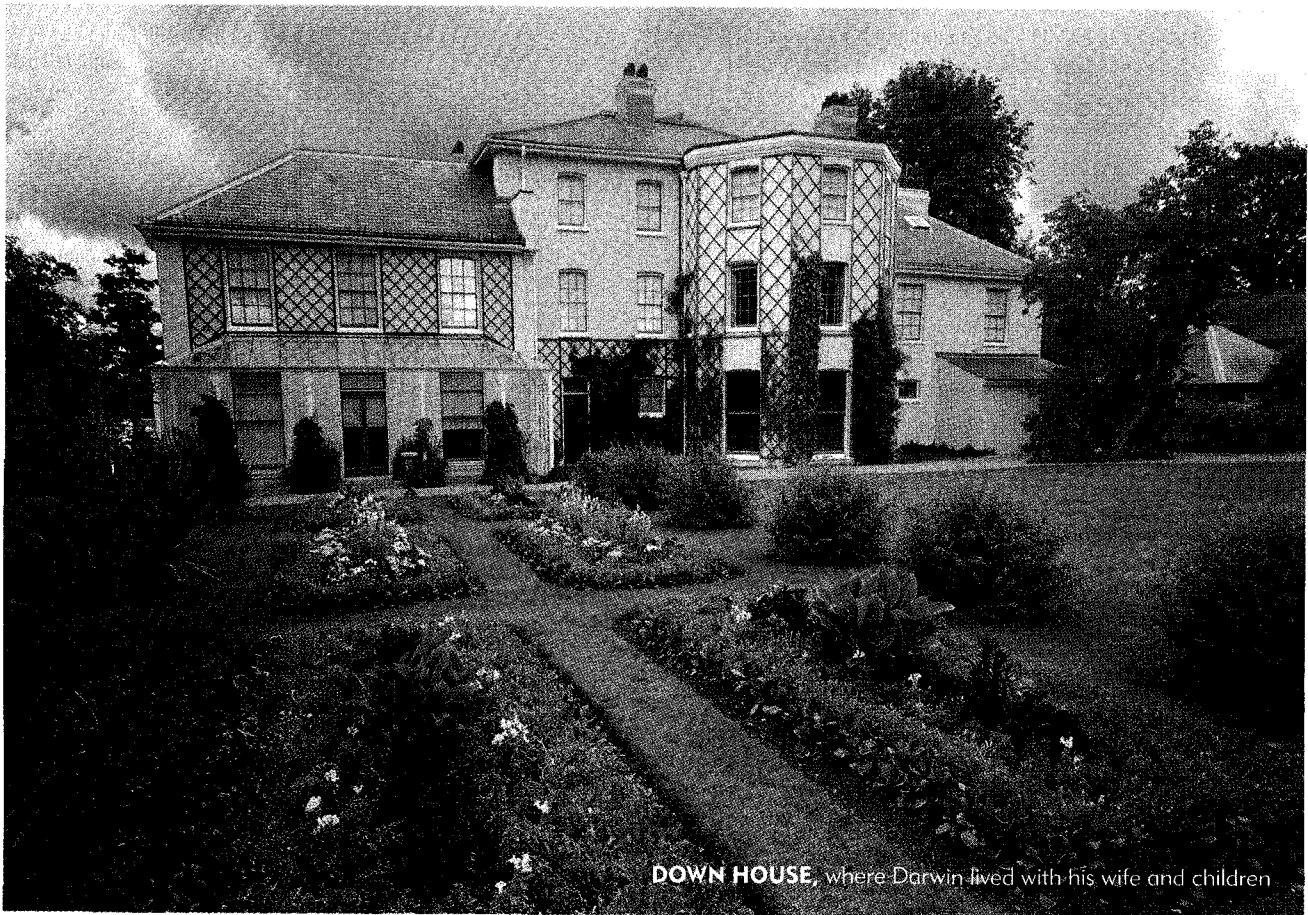
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DOWN HOUSE, where Darwin lived with his wife and children

TRAVELS

The places in and around London that shaped the naturalist as a young man

Heart of Darwin

BY RICHARD CONNIFF

In paintings and sculptures from the last years of his life, Charles Darwin gives the impression of a man deeply wishing he could be somewhere else. At the National Portrait Gallery in London, he keeps his rumpled hat clutched in one hand, ready to bolt for the door. At the Natural History Museum, he has his coat folded across his lap, as if yearning to shed the burden of fame and slip quietly into oblivion. On the £10 note, his eyes are haunted beneath a vast furrowed brow, and there's dismay behind that biblical white beard.

This image of Darwin is everywhere, and that seemed to me, on a recent trip to London, to be a pity. Even the founding father of evolutionary theory was not born a gloomy old man. I began to wonder if it might be possible to walk Darwin's London and get a sense of him as a young man caught up in the fray. The landmarks of his life turned out to be all around. One day, for instance, I ducked into the Burlington Arcade—a handsome 1819 predecessor of the enclosed luxury shopping mall, where the bon ton of Darwin's day shopped—

and then, via another arcade, out onto Albemarle Street. To the right was the Royal Institution, where Darwin attended lectures. Brown's Hotel, where a pro-Darwin group called the X Club used to meet in the 1860s, stood in mid-block. And though Darwin's publishing company was sold off a few years ago to a conglomerate, the seventh generation of John Murrays still presides over the company's old house just down the street. Murray told me he was already being inundated with visitors anticipating next year's big anniversaries of

Darwin's birth (1809) and of the publication of his book *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859).

London has of course also changed. I went to visit 36 Great Marlborough Street, where Darwin was living in a bachelor flat when he got his first tentative inkling of natural selection, in September 1838, and I found the site occupied by a fast-food joint (slogan: "Scream if you want it faster"). I had better luck just below Trafalgar Square, where the Old Admiralty Building stands intact, screened off behind a handsome neoclassical colonnade from the broad avenue of government buildings called Whitehall. The modest U-shaped brick structure within served for centuries

as headquarters of the Royal Navy and home ground to such storied mariners as Cook, Bligh, and Nelson. In September 1831, the 22-year-old Darwin came here for his first meeting with Captain Robert FitzRoy, who was seeking a gentleman naturalist to accompany him on a long expedition on H.M.S. *Beagle*.

The meeting went well: "Gloria in excelsis is the most moderate beginning I can think of," Darwin wrote later that day. He was so eager to get started that he took lodgings around the corner on Spring Gardens, practically tucking himself in at night under the Admiralty's left earlobe.

People are still talking about the consequences of the five years Darwin spent

circumnavigating the globe aboard the *Beagle*. But he had hardly begun to think about evolution when the voyage ended, as I was reminded at a lecture I attended one evening at the Linnean Society. The "world's oldest active biological society" occupies a wing of Burlington House, on Piccadilly, and Darwin was a member (he complained, soon after the *Beagle's* return, about an evening that featured "a couple of intensely stupid papers"). The current meeting room dates from the 1870s and looks the part, with oak window trim, a coffered plasterwork ceiling, and portraits of Darwin (gloomy) and his collaborator Alfred Russel Wallace on one wall. The audience, mostly elderly naturalists, sat on pew-like benches pushed close together, pleased to have the speaker toss them the sort of biological bonbons Darwin himself liked to collect: the mice on St. Kilda, for instance, are twice the size of those on the Scottish mainland, possibly because there are no weasels to send them fleeing down narrow bolt-holes. About Darwin, the tone was affectionate deprecation: By the time the *Beagle* reached the Galapagos, the speaker said, the young explorer was so homesick or bored that he didn't bother going ashore on some islands. He also failed to recognize that the finches he collected were all finches, until the ornithologist John Gould pointed it out to him back in London. Then, though, he began to brood about beaks, islands, and the origin of species.

Darwin did not need evolution to make his name. His South American fossils were an immediate sensation, and he won high praise for a talk to the Geological Society arguing that the coast of Chile had been formed from uplifted sea floor. (The scholarly acclaim left him feeling, he said, "like a peacock admiring his own tail.") He gained admission to the prestigious Athenaeum Club on Pall Mall, a few minutes' stroll from Trafalgar Square; the first time "I sat in that great drawing room, all on a sofa by myself, I felt just like a duke," he confessed.

Along with career building, the Darwin of the post-*Beagle* years was considering the pros and cons of marriage.

THE TRAVEL ADVISORY

Brown's Hotel (www.brownsotel.com), conveniently located on Albemarle Street in the Mayfair neighborhood, is steeped in history. In the 1860s (when it was known as St. George's hotel), it was the meeting place of the X Club, whose members included T. H. Huxley and others who lobbied for Darwinian ideas. Rudyard Kipling wrote *The Jungle Book* there, and Winston Churchill came frequently to drink lunch.

Bentley's Oyster Bar & Grill (www.bentleys.org), a few minutes away on Swallow Street, is a comfortable spot to get dinner after a meeting at the **Linnean Society** (www.linnean.org). **The Wolseley** (www.thewolseley.com), at 160 Piccadilly, is a fashionable lunch place for spotting celebrities (or overhearing 20-something Internet millionaires lament the dissipated nightlife in Shanghai), in a handsome setting of high vaulted ceilings, black lacquered walls with gold detailing, and bright light from the huge front windows.

It's a short walk to **Maggs Bros. Ltd.** bookshop (www.maggs.com), in an unrestored Georgian town house on Berkeley Square. If you're lucky, you might pick up a Darwin first edition (*On the Origin of Species* goes for about £30,000) or vintage anti-Darwin propaganda

(his face on a monkey's body recently sold for £350). **Sotheran's** of Sackville Street (www.sotherans.co.uk) also sells Darwiniana.

In Downe Village, at the foot of the street where Darwin lived, stands the handsome **Queen's Head** pub. The story passed down in one local family is that Darwin used to nip into the "snug" bar on the right, where he could enjoy a beer without being observed by the general public. Along with decent food and drink, the pub has a rich history as the World War II local for American Eagle Squadron volunteers flying with the RAF out of nearby Biggin Hill airfield. Darwin certainly spent time across the street at the **George and Dragon**, but mainly in the course of fulfilling his duties as a village father. (Among other things, he was treasurer of the local Coal and Clothing Club.)

The standard biography is *Darwin*, by Adrian Desmond and James Moore. And to sample Darwin's words at firsthand, consult the **Darwin Correspondence Project's** excellent Web site, www.darwinproject.ac.uk. Finally, events will be taking place throughout Britain in 2009 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of *On the Origin of Species*. For details, check www.darwin200.org.



As an “object to be beloved & played with,” he thought that a wife would be “better than a dog anyhow.” One afternoon I went out walking with Joe Cain, a senior lecturer in the history of biology at University College London. We headed to 2 Bedford Place, a few minutes from the college, where the geologist Leonard Horner used to live with his five highly educated daughters. Darwin was a frequent visitor. But his father steered him instead toward Emma Wedgwood, a first cousin, good-natured and with a handsome dowry. The two were soon looking for their own first home in the

Grant had taught him basic field biology. But Darwin managed to avoid him for the three years he lived on Gower Street; apparently he didn’t want his career tainted by Grant’s radical beliefs—including an early brand of evolutionary thinking.

One Sunday I traveled by train and then bus to Downe Village, 15 miles away, where the young Darwins moved to escape the filth of the city. Their new home was known rather unpromisingly as Down House. But for a visitor still stuck on Darwin as *éminence grise*, the

what catches the eye are its long, bird-like iron legs borrowed from a bedstead, with wheels for scooting from bookshelf to table, or for checking out visitors from the window. Darwin also regularly went roaming from his study on foot, to dip snuff from a jug in the hall, or to check the mail, delivered several times a day then. (The Darwin Correspondence Project counts 14,500 letters sent or received during his life.) He sometimes played billiards with his butler, Joseph Parslow, and he wrote, “I find it does me a deal of good, & drives the horrid species out of my head.”



DARWIN'S STUDY AND GREENHOUSE; pages from his theory of evolution, first read in the meeting room of the Linnean Society

same Bloomsbury neighborhood, though Emma prudently advised against living too close to “the Horneritas.”

They moved to a rented brick row house on Upper Gower Street, which they nicknamed “Macaw Cottage” for the gaudy decor. The house was destroyed during World War II, Cain said, and pointed out similar houses across the street that had survived. But what really interested him was the location. From the back garden, Darwin would have looked out on the college’s main building, where his onetime mentor Robert Grant had become a professor of zoology.

really startling thing about the house is the pervasive air of playfulness. He and Emma filled the place with 10 children. While Darwin struggled with an eight-year study of barnacle taxonomy, his offspring happily raided his supplies and sometimes lit out with his microscope seat, a burlwood stool on brass wheels. They used it, with a cane for an oar, to go punting around the first floor of the house.

Darwin also seems to have engaged in a form of punting. In photographs of the study, his chair, high-backed and narrow, looks a little severe. But in person,

This routine clearly suited Darwin. He and Emma enjoyed a remarkably compatible marriage (maybe it was that first-cousin thing). She was relaxed and tolerant, even when Charles was studying earthworms and put clay pots filled with them on her prized Broadwood grand piano to see how they responded to the vibrations. He in turn listened to her religious concern that his evolutionary thinking would keep them from being together for eternity. The first draft of the natural-selection idea got put away in the game closet under the stairs, where it remained with the tennis racquets and

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By John Fleming

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croquet mallets for more than a decade. But the "horrid species" would in time come creeping back.

From the house, I went out to a wooded path, called the Sandwalk, where Darwin used to stroll at midday. Some of the oak, yew, and beech trees he planted still stand, and a scattering of bluebells were in flower. But for me the best thing about the walk was the point early on where Darwin sometimes veered off to dawdle among the botanical experiments in his hothouse. His dog, trotting contentedly along toward the farther reaches of the Sandwalk, would then collapse instantly into a state of utter dejection known to all as "the hot-house face." Darwin described this face in his 1872 book, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.

He also described the faces of his children, who served as examples of the unity of expressive behavior in the human and animal worlds. Upstairs at Down House, photographs survive from around the time *On the Origin of Species* was published: One son goofily squashes his nose over to the side with a finger. Another son, slightly younger, struggles to look more mature than his age. And there's a later photograph of Darwin on horseback, with a scribbled note that says, "Hurrah—no letters to day. C.D." You get the feeling that at Down House, Darwin was taking notes on the natural history of his own family—and also basking in it.

In the end, Emma was right: they would not be together for eternity. He would suffer the fate of other great men and women, being buried in Westminster Abbey. She lies with various family members in the churchyard in the middle of Downe Village. And if the Darwin of the old paintings and sculptures visibly yearns to be somewhere else, this is surely the place, back with Emma in their own private world, before he became a creature of his admirers and his antagonists, back before his science told him more perhaps than even he really wanted to know about the nature of life. ▀

Richard Conniff's book about his wildlife encounters will be published by W. W. Norton next year.

48825

FOOD

A cooking school in the Greek islands shows that simplicity plus necessity equals great cuisine.

Dining With Dionysus

BY CORBY KUMMER

Cooking classes change the way you look at the world—or certainly the way you look at what's on supermarket shelves and in your refrigerator. Thus the logic of cooking vacations, which put you in literal touch with another culture and make you want to try things, once you see up close how easy and sensible they are. Most cultures, after all, evolve cuisines that require minimal equipment and technique (unless, of course, they are French).

Aglaia Kremezi and Costas Moraitis offer cooking courses on the Cycladic island of Kea, the closest island to Athens, that are true vacations. The couple welcomes and entertains students, making them feel like friends (and sending reassuring personalized logistics e-mails beforehand; the Web site is www.keartisanal.com). In just a few days, students come to understand Kremezi and Moraitis's love of the island and what grows there. The couple's approach, based on letting what is in the garden tell you what to make, is so flexible that you go home with a new impetus to visit the farmer's market.

Many courses are intensive and technique-heavy. This one isn't. Instead, it is designed as a week that will give you a very enjoyable view of a culture, and demonstrate the equation every cook should know: simplicity + necessity = great cuisine.

I was surprised by Kremezi's relaxed approach, because I have long known her as an intellectual firebrand—on top of every piece of nutritional (and political) news, the kind of researcher who won't hesitate to go to an obscure regional festival to find the one old woman or man who still makes a rustic pie with phyllo layers, and then consult Harold McGee,



MED SPREAD: Kea's bread, yogurt-custard pies, fresh anchovies, and tomato salad

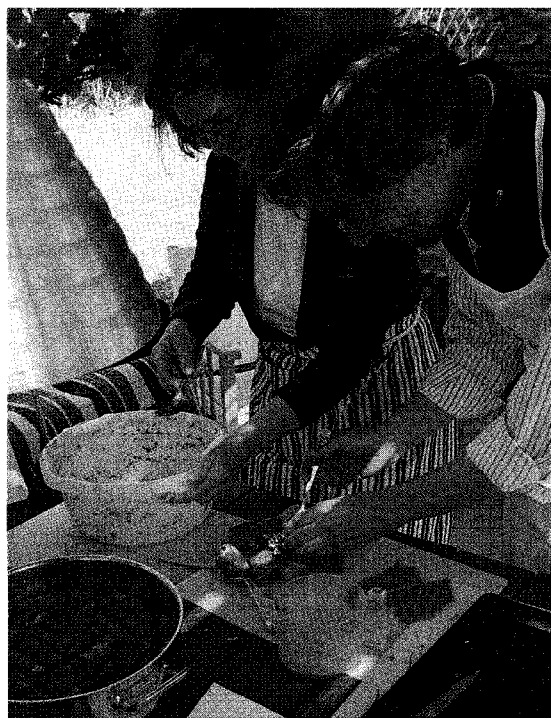
the author of *On Food and Cooking*, on why they put raki, the traditional liqueur, in the dough. (The answer: to keep the crunch. Her substitute: vodka.)

Both Kremezi and her husband spent time at English-speaking universities: she studied photography and cinema in England; he, biblical texts at Yale. The house where students spend the week (and can check their e-mail) is filled with reference books on art and

modern Greek culture, and with folk art Kremezi collected while researching her own books on the cooking of the Greek islands and the Mediterranean (her *Mediterranean Hot and Spicy* will be published next spring).

MORE ON THEATLANTIC.COM
For a slideshow about cooking on Kea, narrated by Corby Kummer, visit www.theatlantic.com/greece.

A great advantage over other cooking experiences abroad is that Kremezi is so attuned to the tastes, available ingredients, and habits of American cooks. Five of her nine books have been written for the U.S. market (the others were for Greece), and she is a hands-on consultant to two leading East Coast Greek restaurants, Molyvos, in New York City, and



AGLAIA KREMEZI and the author stuff grape leaves with rice and herbs.

Zaytinya, in Washington. Her recipes can require some adjustment at home, but they are likelier than most to work the first time. And anyway, the point of any cooking class is to make you trust your hands and eyes over a printed page or computer screen.

More than long kitchen sessions, convivial meals on the stone terrace under a grape arbor and long afternoon hikes and boating excursions are the order of the week. American friends who live on the island join most meals, and the excursions are led by the American-educated Kostis Maroulis, the third partner in Kea Artisanal. Maroulis came back to Kea to revive a family farm and sail his *soultana*, a very rare traditional wooden boat he commissioned from a craftsman on the

island of Lesbos. It is his pride, and he always takes students in it for a sail.

Classes are in the morning, and start with a general discussion of the ingredients being featured in the day's menu. Students participate at will, assisted by two women, both sharp cooks, who give notes on technique and keep the pace moving toward getting lunch on the long table. Touching, working with, and often picking ingredients in the garden gives students a new confidence. I came back resolved to make my own fresh cheese using nothing more than milk, cream, and lemon juice, and to pick grape leaves as wrappers for transcendently good and simple stuffed grape leaves. I even wanted to tackle octopus, if it could taste anything like what Moraitis—the organizer and general fix-it guy, who claims indifference as a cook—achieves on his grill. And I knew that one dish would become a kitchen staple: risotto made with orzo and thickened with a common Greek ingredient that magically reveals its power to make an instant, creamy sauce.

Kea, a brief ferry ride from Lavrion, a port near the Athens airport (though a long drive from downtown), is standard-issue Greek island: dramatic hills and mountains descending straight to the sea, Mediterranean bushes and trees and vines blooming everywhere, towns looming high in the mountains like enchanted cities, crescent-shaped fishing villages appearing suddenly around a bend. It is exceptionally dry, and so a distinguishing architectural feature is meticulous dry stone walls that shore up streets, buildings, and the steep terraces that make practically every bit of land tillable. The island traditionally lived on dairy and meat farming; now the economy is based on tourism and construction, and the road along the water is lined with stucco-walled condominiums for which Athenians pay startling prices. White wooden hives can be spotted on seemingly every terrace: honey (and yogurt) on Kea, like everywhere in Greece, is just better.

The course begins with a walk around the garden, which Kremezi and Moraitis

have made flourish in the eight years since they decided to live full-time on Kea. Kremezi's grandfather grew up on the island and taught her how and when to pick wild greens, an essential Greek skill. (Surprisingly, the diet on Greek islands includes anything that can be grown or found on land but very little from the sea: fish that can fetch a price goes to mainland markets. The disinclination toward fish is reminiscent of Sardinia, where the sea was associated with invaders.) We picked grape leaves on the first morning—young, soft, matte-surfaced ones, as Kremezi instructed, not shiny older ones—to blanch for wrappers around a rice stuffing freshened with fennel bulb, parsley, dill, mint, and lemon.

Even bad stuffed grape leaves are good, but these were better than any I'd had, for the vivid and cooling flavors; Kremezi made a version with ground meat, too. Stewing the stuffed leaves in water mixed with a good amount of olive oil and lemon juice is key, and they're better the second day. (The recipe is in Kremezi's *Foods of the Greek Islands*, on the short list of books every cook should own.) Stuffing and wrapping the leaves is not as easy as it looks, we learned as we took turns. We became sufficiently competitive that we tried to keep track of where ours had been placed beneath the upside-down plate that keeps the packages from coming apart as they simmer.

Grape leaves in brine are fairly easy to find, frozen whole leaves (a better substitute) harder, but with some ingenuity you might discover a source for fresh ones in your own neighborhood. Friends from the course came home and scouted (and purloined) fresh grape leaves growing on the trellis of a café in downtown Washington. I'm looking for a local gardener myself—and for a fig tree. The milky substance inside the fleshy leaves protects and moistens fish as it grills, and charred fig leaves make a great side snack.

Some of the food we ate with such pleasure would be hard to duplicate at home, like the lamb chops from a neighbor's animal, rubbed with a Middle Eastern spice mixture and grilled over

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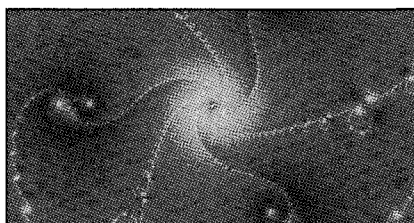
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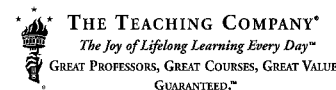
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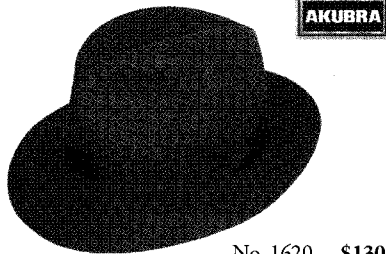
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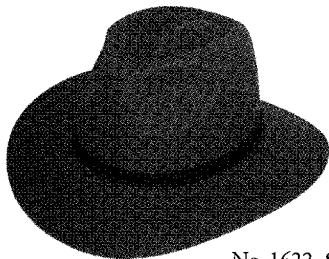
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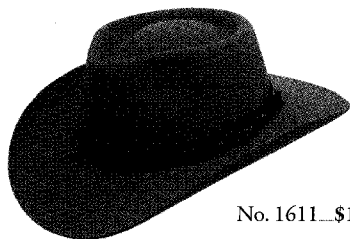
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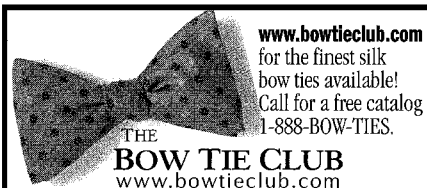
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a wood fire (always a good way to grill lamb; single-cut chops are the best to grill, for easy lifting and plentiful burnt bits). And it would be a challenge to find octopus as good as what Moraitis bought from the island fishmonger, which Kremezi marinated overnight in oil, wine vinegar, red wine, garlic, oregano, and red pepper. I'm up for a try, though, given that the vinegar in the marinade obviates the usual pounding, and given the number of converts to the chewy, charred, meaty tentacles.

It will likely be impossible, sadly, to find the sweets Kremezi enterprisingly had shipped from neighboring islands for us to taste, including baklava filled with nuts and a sweet olive mixture, which is surprisingly good (you can order it from demeterspantry.com). The syrup-drenched baklava we know, made with paper-thin dough, is generally left to professional cooks (three bakeries and cafés sell competing baklavas in the small port near the couple's house; no matter how well fed, by the end of the week each student had managed to hit every one of them). Instead we rolled Kremezi's pasta-thin, vodka-laced phyllo dough on cornstarch, and layered it with several fillings for the rustic savory pie called *pita*, which is more like lasagna than like baklava.

Other dishes are encouragingly doable: roasted halves of tomatoes, eggplants, and bell peppers stuffed with a rice mixture similar to the one for grape leaves but with currants, pine nuts, and grated cheese; yellow-split-pea mash, lush and sweet and pleasantly floury, with a caper-and-onion stew flavored with sweet red wine like Marsala or the Greek Mavrodaphne. (Wines are overlooked but important Greek products. The Mavrodaphne was one of several that struck the group during an evening wine-and-cheese tasting led by an expert the couple brings in from Athens.) And even reluctant bread makers wanted to try the fast, versatile flatbreads Kremezi served at almost every meal. She proudly calls the recipe "Aglaia's Bread," because it took her so long to master the proportion

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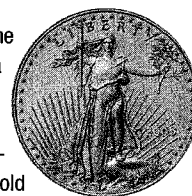
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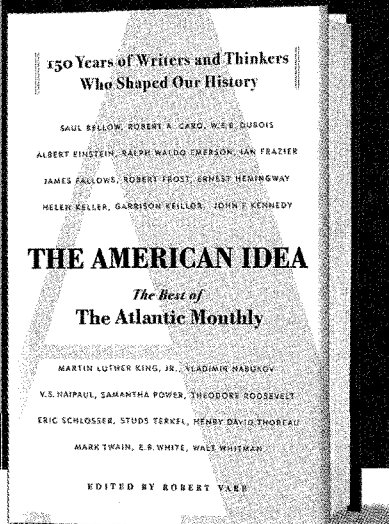
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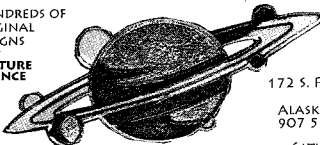
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of semolina, all-purpose, and whole-wheat flours for the dough, which can be topped with whatever leftovers are lying around.

The recipe that exemplified the week, and Kremezi's style, was one she tossed off on the last day and says she makes all the time: risotto with orzo, the pasta shaped like ovoid grains of rice, and grated zucchini, lemon, and feta. It's fool-proof, and can be adapted to any number of vegetables you find at the farmer's market or (overgrown) in your garden. It shows how crumbled feta becomes a thick, creamy sauce that absorbs and amplifies other flavors—and what a difference the two cornerstones of Greek cooking, olive oil and lemons, can make to a seemingly familiar dish.

To serve six as a main course or eight as a side dish, heat seven to eight cups of chicken or vegetable broth or, if you don't have broth, water. In a large skillet, heat 1/2 cup of olive oil and add four or five cloves of peeled and thinly sliced garlic and four cups of diced or grated zucchini or yellow squash. Sauté, stirring, for 10 minutes over medium-high heat; the squash will exude a good deal of liquid. Add 1/2 cup of white wine, a pound of orzo, and salt and pepper to taste, and stir to coat the pasta with oil. Pour in three cups of broth and continue to cook for about 20 minutes, stirring frequently and adding more liquid as needed. The pasta can be al dente, for the risotto effect, or cooked completely through, as you like.

Remove the cooked orzo from the heat and add 1/4 cup of freshly squeezed lemon juice, three tablespoons of grated or shredded lemon zest, and 1 1/2 cups of feta cheese, mashed with a fork (and now: magic sauce). Buy the least salty feta you can find (if you get the feta fetish, as you should, order several of the barrel-aged fetas from www.zingermans.com), and save some of the crumbs for garnish. Snip over the risotto whatever combination you like of fennel fronds, fresh dill, and mint. That is, let the garden tell you how to season an irresistibly Greek, and simple, dish. ▀

Corby Kummer is an *Atlantic* senior editor.

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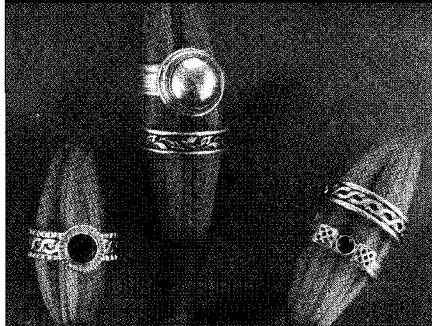
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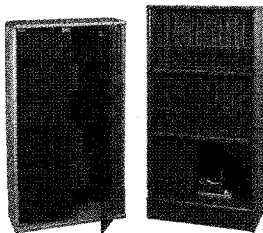


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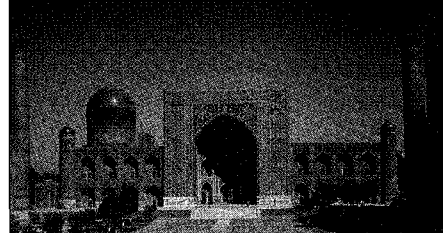
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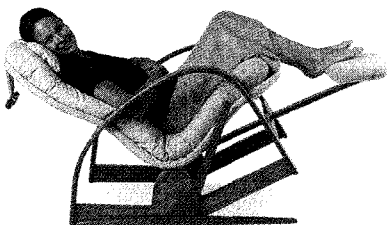


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WORD COURT

BY BARBARA WALLRAFF



JERRY LAUB, of Springfield, Ohio, writes, "I believe the expression *in the wrong place at the wrong time* is overused. Example: if a person walks down a dark alley at midnight and is knocked over the head by a mugger, I would agree he was *in the wrong place at the wrong time*. If, however, a person is walking out of church on a Sunday morning and is struck by a meteorite and killed, I would say he was *in the right place at the wrong time*. Do you agree that oftentimes this phrase is applied incorrectly?"

Please tell me you made up the church-and-meteorite example and nobody actually called those circumstances *the wrong place at the wrong time*. But they're not *the right place at the wrong time* either. This phrase has to do with a potentially advantageous situation that someone is unable to exploit. For instance, a right fielder on the Modesto (California) Nuts baseball team was quoted in *The Modesto Bee* as saying, "We hit well at this field, but a lot of the balls we hit get run down in the outfield. We hit a lot of the right balls to the right place at the wrong time."

All the same, I agree with you that *the wrong place at the wrong time* is overused—even a cliché. It hasn't been fresh since the middle of the Korean War, when General Omar Bradley said, in testimony before a Senate committee, "Red China is not the powerful nation seeking to dominate the world. Frankly, in the

opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, this strategy would involve us in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy."

It's true that any one of Bradley's four *wrong* phrases would have made the same point—but less emphatically. Oddly, the two main ways to be forceful in English are to be succinct and to be wordy. The latter is out of fashion, and people

the time people who want a *discreet* meeting say they want a *discrete* meeting. *Webster's New World Dictionary*, under *discrete*, does say in a note, "(see *discreet*)," but the definitions it gives—"separate and distinct, ... unrelated" and "made up of distinct parts"—are not what people are trying to communicate in their ads. Why the confusion in usage?"

Most visitors to personals sites aren't there to meet good spellers. Nonetheless, it doesn't take a particularly bad speller to write *discrete* instead of *discreet*, meaning "confidential." This mistake is common, and not only on the Internet.

I can see why: if I were trying to turn *discretion* into an adjective off the top of my head, that's probably how I'd spell it, too. And checking a dictionary wouldn't necessarily set me straight. Among major American dictionaries, only *The New Oxford American* actually points people reading the *discrete* entry toward *discreet*. The note you cite isn't trying to help users distinguish between the two words. It just means to say, in lexicography's telegraphic fashion, that they're related etymologically. So unless I decided to look into the word's history, I wouldn't illicit—excuse me, elicit!—the information I needed.

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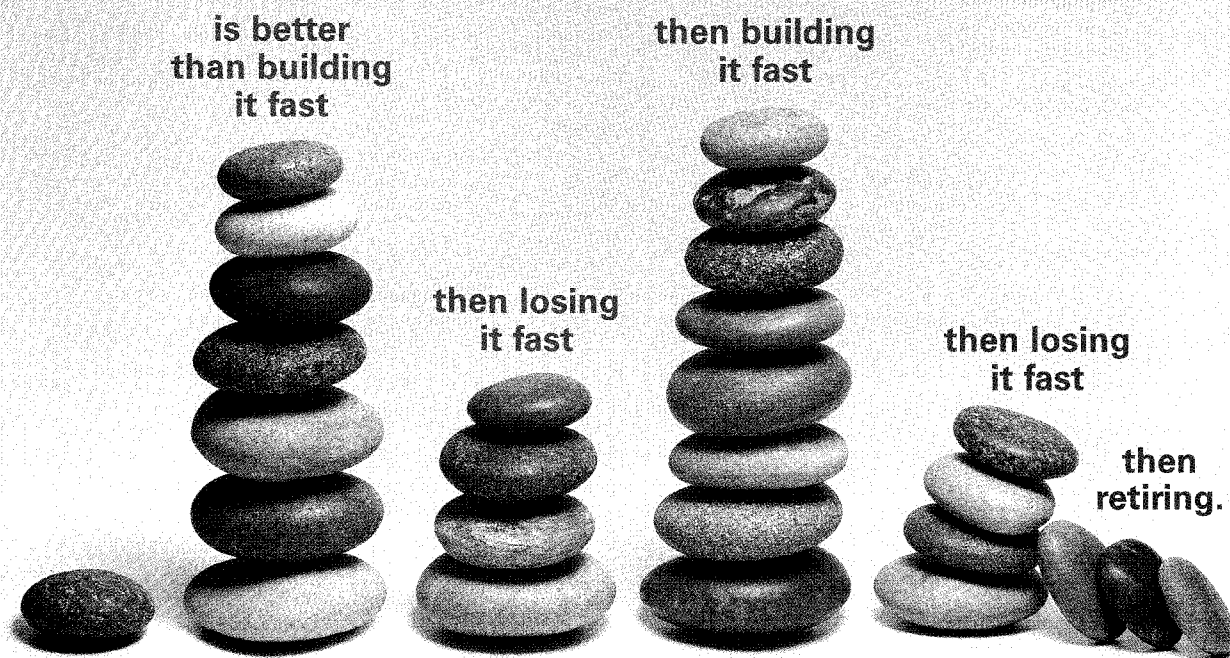
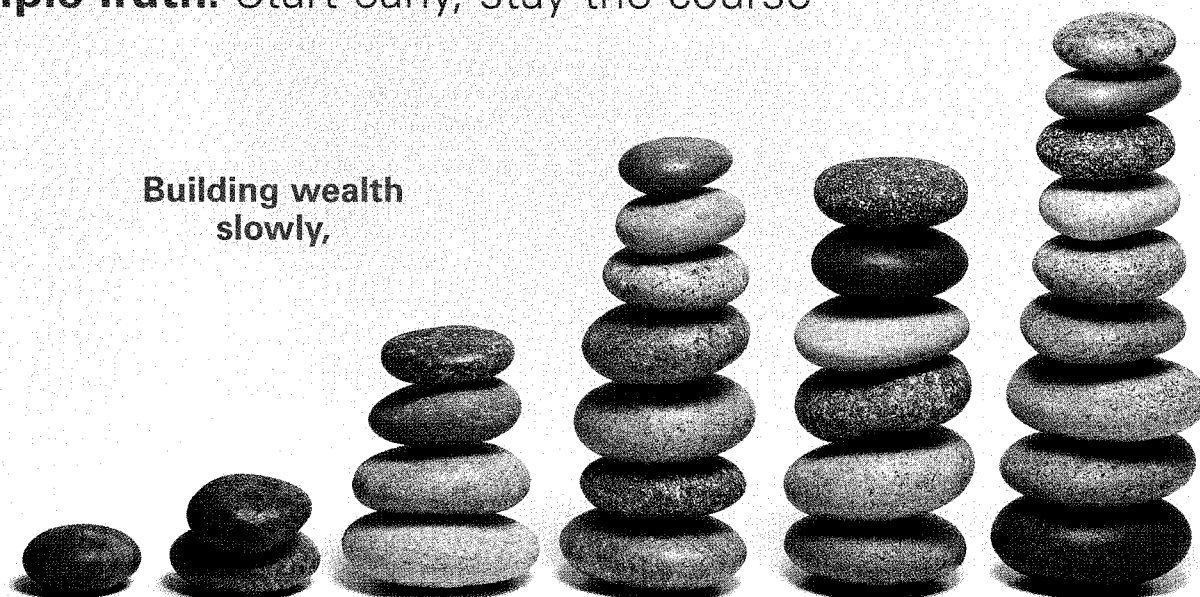


who don't like it call it redundancy. Those of us who do sometimes like it call it pleonasm: "the using of more words than are required to give the sense intended ... often resorted to deliberately for rhetorical effect," as H. W. Fowler's *Modern English Usage* explains this term.

DEL CAIN, of Orlando, Fla., writes, "I am a retired librarian and occasionally, out of curiosity, look at Internet personals sites. It seems that most of

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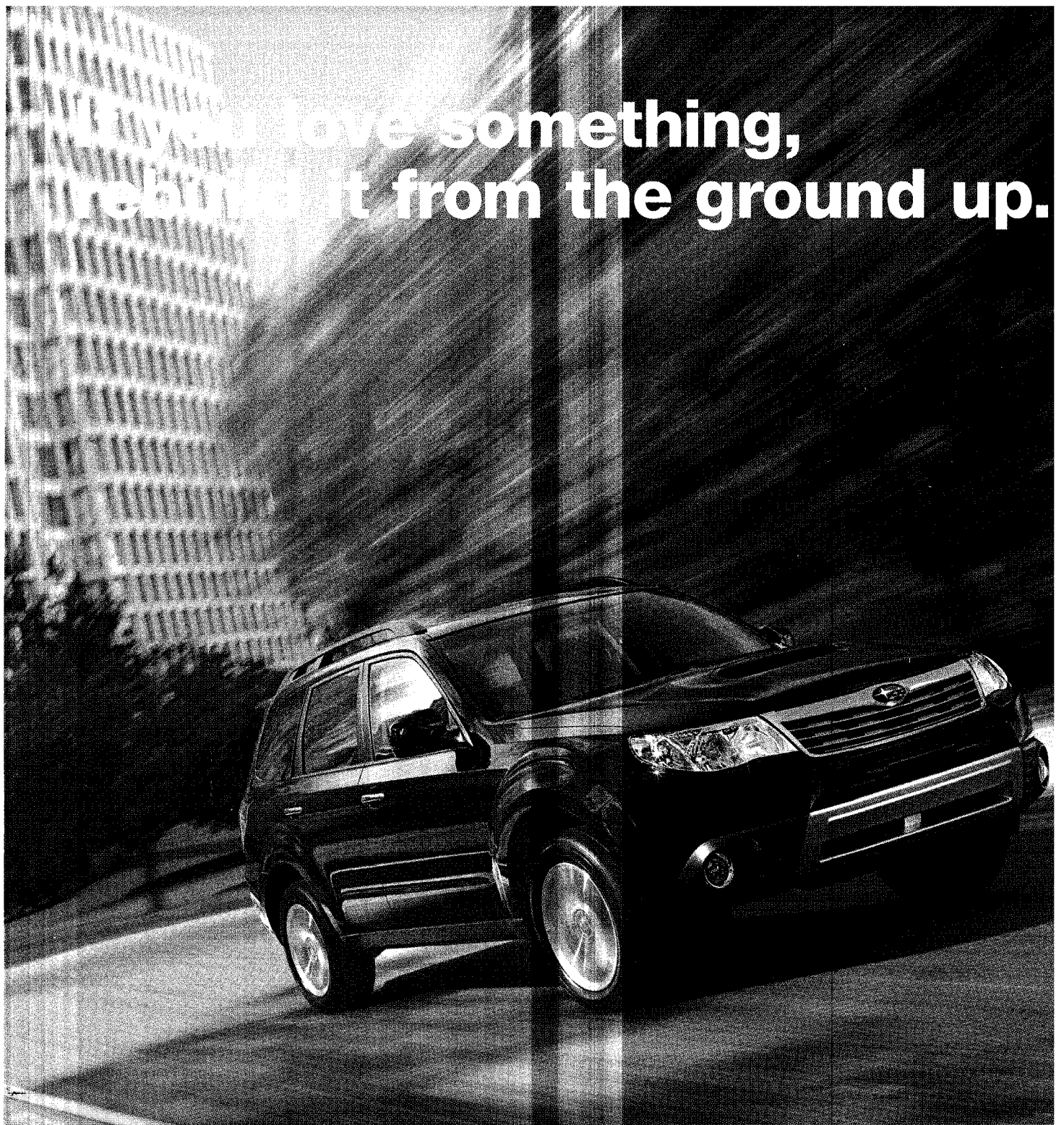
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